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# Fighting Dr. Diana

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# Fighting Dr. Diana

# 1

It was a trapdoor delivery.

Diana had heard of the haste and dispatch with which a woman could, at times, bring forth a baby. She had listened to the subject in lectures, had read of it in textbooks on obstetrics, had even heard of it first-hand from interns who had faced it and been dragged, willy-nilly, inexperience and all, through the ordeal. But until this day she had never actually believed that it could happen so swiftly.

Some twenty minutes ago she had looked at her watch and noted that it was exactly three-fifteen, only twenty minutes before the plane would land. Looking down the aisle of the big jet, she saw that one of the rest rooms was unoccupied. This would be a good time for her to get ready for deplaning, she thought, before all the other women got the same idea.

It took five minutes to make herself look the way she wanted to look. Two minutes to take off the old make-up. Another minute and a half to

put on the new, accentuating what was there, but so delicately that only another woman could tell that nature had been bolstered and abetted by art.

The other half minute was used to quickly brush out the soft taffy-blonde hair, then shape the short locks into a casual frame about her face. After that she took time to fit on the wide-brimmed hat and smooth down the skirt of the navy blue knit suit she wore—a sleeveless, form-fitting, mini-skirted dress with a smart knit jacket.

She took a last peek into the mirror and gave a nod of approval. She looked well groomed. Her clothes were good, her figure was right for them—slim yet rounded. Her face was all right, too: gray eyes framed by blonde hair, mouth a little wide but upcurving, and high, strong cheekbones. Tying it all together was a creamy complexion, but, of course, there was no knowing what a whole summer in Florida would do to that.

At least for now she looked good, and the thought brought a satisfied smile as she returned to her seat. This Dr. Timothy Henry, who was to meet her in Miami in a few minutes, seemed to think she was another middle-aged female who had nothing better to do with her time than to come to Florida, right at the start of the long hot summer, to help him with his work! What was worse, he had taken her for granted, so much so

that he had sent her the plane ticket without even waiting for her answer, and it was a coach ticket at that!

Of course, she was more than glad to help out and give old Dr. Eldred a chance for a vacation, but why couldn't this partner of his handle things alone? Surely there couldn't be too much work for one man—even an old grump such as Dr. Henry must be—to handle in the summertime! Folks only crowded Florida in the winter, didn't they?

The whole thing had upset her own plans to go into practice near Los Angeles, which had made her quite angry. Not at Dr. Eldred, who had served her family for three generations, and who had staunchly backed her desire to go to med school. Her whole fury was aimed at the high-handed Dr. Timothy Henry.

She would show him, from his first glance on, that she was not the sort he expected. It would be fun to see his face, she thought gloatingly as she pulled on her spotless white gloves.

The sign to fasten seat belts flashed on, and right then, while Diana was obeying the instructions, her plans began to veer off the chosen path. The head stewardess came down the aisle and stopped by Diana's seat.

"You're Dr. Davis?" she asked quickly. "A physician?" Then, as Diana nodded, she went on:

"Oh, please come!" Her voice was urgent. "We have an emergency up front." She started back up the aisle with no further explanation.

Diana followed her, and as they went through the curtains that separated the first-class cabin from the coach, she saw that the few passengers in there were gathering up their belongings. Another stewardess was saying apologetically, "We're sorry, but it will only be for a short while."

"What happened?" Diana asked as her guide stopped to let a passenger by.

"Oh, didn't I tell you? A girl is having a baby. We put her in the long seat of the lounge up ahead."

Diana gasped as they went on down the aisle. A baby. A delivery here, with no conveniences, no trained help! But then, she reflected swiftly, they were so close to landing that she would probably need to do no more than reassure the woman, make her as comfortable as possible, and tell her firmly that she must find the strength to hold back the baby—by sheer will power, if necessary—until they had landed.

"Have the pilot radio ahead for an ambulance and a doctor to be waiting," she instructed the stewardess.

"He's already done that. This girl's husband is

in the Air Force, based nearby. So I guess everything will be all right when we land."

The laboring woman was young, pretty, and giggling nervously despite the gravity of her condition. "Isn't all this crazy?" she got out between panting breaths. "The doctor in Dallas said it would be two or three more weeks yet, so I thought I had plenty of time."

"I don't see how you ever got past us," another stewardess observed. "We try to screen out girls like you so you'll stay safely on the ground."

The girl giggled again. "I held my tote bag up in front of me and slipped by while you were answering somebody's questions! And I had another girl buy my ticket. I—" Her laughter turned into another throaty gasp of pain.

Diana had already stripped off her jacket and gloves. She gave a nod of approval as the head stewardess came up with a first-aid kit, a sterile stainless-steel basin, sealed in a big plastic bag, and a bottle of pHisoHex. "Brought everything I could find," the stewardess announced. "Grace!" to the other girl. "Fetch some towels, newspapers —anything you can scrape up."

Diana said swiftly, "Pour some of the pHisoHex over my hands quickly! Save the rest and—oh, please see if you can find something to cover my clothes!"

"Will do!" the girl said. Then, as she straightened up, "My name is Erma. It'll be easier for you if you know."

"Thanks, Erma!" Diana smiled. Then, her hands as sterile as could be managed here, she knelt down beside the low seat to examine the patient. But when Erma turned back the white slip to expose the bare abdomen, another contraction came, one that bulged up under the skin like a giant fist, squeezing cruelly as if determined to empty the contents of whatever it held.

"The rest of the pHiso!" Diana urged, and grabbed a handful of towels from Grace and propped them under the patient's buttocks. When Erma came back with something like a sheet over her arm, Diana told her to use the remaining antiseptic to prep the patient. As it was, the baby's head was beginning to show. Only nature could hold back the birth now.

"It'll still take some more time," Diana observed, "and we shouldn't be going down right now."

"Erma just went to tell the pilot," Grace offered. "He'll know what to do. He's got five kids of his own."

Evidently the pilot did know. "We're going to cruise up here for a while," he announced over the intercom, his voice casual. "Another passenger

is being added to our list. And good luck, girls!" he added heartily.

The patient giggled again weakly, and then, without any instructions, she bore down. Diana had turned away to get more towels. When she turned back, the baby's head had completely emerged, and as she watched, fascinated, hardly knowing what to do to help or to hinder, the baby slipped out as easily as a fish slips through the water. And the only sound from the mother was the queer breathy groan that came more from the mechanical pressure forcing the breath out of her than from her own agony; it was the birth moan that is wrung from even the stolid savage-woman in the last great pang.

And to add to the sudden wonder of it, the baby cried with no outside help. No spanking, no upending to drain out the bronchial passages. All by itself, it drew in its first breath and let it out in a cry of astonishment.

"A little girl!" Diana announced. "A beautiful, healthy, and—I believe—a perfectly formed baby girl!"

Diana felt her heart beat faster as she slipped her hands under the baby to lift it from the soiled towels and lay it across the mother's abdomen until the umbilical cord could be severed. It was crazy, but her throat felt tight and she knew a

strange breathless joy, a sense of accomplishment. The miracle of birth had always impressed her, yet she had been glad when her term in Obstetrics had been finished. This, however, was something she had never before experienced.

"You sweet thing!" she murmured, more woman than doctor at that moment. "You sweet little girl!"

"Girl?" the mother echoed. "Well, Dick and I sort of hoped for boys, but girls will be fine."

"*Girls?*" laughed Grace. "They come just one at a time, you know."

"Not always!" Diana said sharply as another contraction bulged the abdomen and another head crowned. "Quick! Get me scissors—some sort of string! If there's any antiseptic left, dip the string in it, but *hurry!* I've got to get this one loose! Here comes another!"

The second baby came as easily as the first one. Diana barely had time to tie the first cord, carefully, not clamp it, then sever it easily. This one she had to tie with a piece of plain old string dipped in the remains of the pHisoHex, just the way her grandmother would have done for a neighbor. Then, snipping the umbilical cord hastily and handing the baby to Erma to wrap in whatever she could find, she turned to find the second child already there.

"A boy!" Grace squealed. Then, to the mother, "You've got one of each!"

The boy was slightly larger than his sister and as perfectly formed, but he was not quite as self-sufficient. Diana had to lift him up by his feet and smack his small red bottom before he cried out indignantly, but after that he kept on crying, his forehead puckered laughably into an angry male frown.

"Well, that seems to be all there is," Diana said in relief after a quick examination. For a moment there, it had seemed as if babies would keep coming in an endless succession. "Just twins. No more."

"Only two," the mother assured her. "The doctor X-rayed me and I saw the pictures, and then—oh, I've been acting like a kid lately. But last month I got homesick and wanted to be with Mama in Dallas when the baby came, so I went there. Then, when I found out there'd be twins, I just had to be with Dick! I was sure up in the air, trying to make up my mind where to have them!"

Up in the air is right, Diana thought, but made no comment. She was too busy to speak. The afterbirths came as quickly as the babies had, and finally, with another relieved sigh, she said, "We can land now, I think."

So, a moment later, the pilot's voice rose again.

"We're landing now. And we've added *two* passengers to our list. Twins—a girl and a boy. Congratulations to the mother, and to the doctor and stewardesses who helped her through! And thanks to all of you for being so patient."

Diana looked at her watch. Exactly fifteen minutes ago the stewardess had come for her. In that small span of time she had handled her first multiple-birth delivery under anything but regular hospital conditions.

She had brought mother and babies through safely, although, she acknowledged honestly, her skill had helped but little. But the babies were here, the mother happy and safe, and Diana felt more like a doctor than she ever had before.

## 2

The plane landed and coasted into place. They would take off the mother and babies first, it had been announced, but when the door was opened, no pair of stretcher-bearers entered. Nor any doctor. Just a very wild-eyed, young man in an Air Force uniform who came catapulting in, then stood still, blinking, casting a frightened glance around.

"Dick!" exclaimed the new mother, and for a few moments there was a reunion. Then the men were there with the stretcher, expertly bundling mother and infants onto it and covering them with a blanket.

A youngish man in a blue cotton suit appeared, staring at Diana, his dark eyes wide. "Hey, are *you* the doctor?" he demanded, looking as if he were going to whistle at her. "Well, looks as if you had your hands full! Congratulations! I'm Keith Mizner, M.D. With the Air Force medical staff. There'll be some papers for you to sign, but we'll

catch those later. You're the one who's going to Kaola City, aren't you?"

She nodded. He pulled her aside as the stretcher was carried out. Then, still holding her arm and looking up the aisle past her, he called out suddenly, "Good Lord, Lex! I didn't know you were aboard!"

The man was taking down a briefcase from the rack above a first-class seat; he turned at the greeting. He was a man in his early forties, Diana judged; one whose impeccable grooming and entire manner screamed success—and money. Everything looked expensive, from his perfectly fitting lightweight suit to his leather briefcase.

"Just back from a quick trip to Dallas," he returned shortly without looking at Keith.

The latter was not squelched. "How come you didn't have a part in delivering those twins?" he demanded gaily. "After all, you're a doctor!"

The other had his briefcase down now, and he came along the aisle. "It was a little out of my line," he said. "And since there was another doctor aboard—a very capable one, evidently—I gave her the privilege. I'm Dr. Clydon," he added, "and the stewardess told me you are Dr. Davis."

He looked directly at Diana, and for a moment her breath caught. There was something hypnotic about that dark-eyed gaze, something hypnotic

about the whole man. An animal attraction, Diana decided quickly; a charm that emanated from the way he looked, the way he talked, the way he carried himself.

He was handsome. There was no denying that. Even the gray streaks in his dark hair added to that charm. For an instant she responded to his spell, then anger rose within her. Another doctor, and he hadn't offered to help! The stewardess had probably asked him first, but when she told him there was another doctor aboard, he had passed the hard job on. He probably didn't want to soil his clothes or his hands, Diana thought—and was suddenly conscious of her own disheveled condition.

"Obstetrics are not exactly in my line, either," she observed crisply, "but I was trained to answer any call for help."

His smile tightened for an instant, and angry lights flickered in his eyes. Keith broke in swiftly, as if to ward off a storm, "Dr. Davis is going to your town, Lex, to take over Eldred's work while he's away."

"Kaola City?" he said sharply. Then, smiling again, "You'll need transportation. I'll not be leaving Miami till late tonight—in a private plane. But if you—"

"Thanks, but no," Diana returned shortly, and

Keith Mizner spoke up again, still warding off unpleasantness, it seemed.

"Tim Henry's waiting for her here. And gosh —I'd better get to my patients!" Then, to Diana, "Like I said, I'll be seeing you! Good-bye!" And he bolted out the plane door after the stretcher.

"Good-bye!" Dr. Clydon said politely, and followed him out. Diana looked around. The encounter with the handsome Dr. Clydon had taken only a moment, yet in that small space of time the stewardesses, as competently as if they cleared up after a birth at the end of every flight, had already gathered up the litter and removed it. And the passengers were leaving the plane.

Diana went back up the aisle, picked up her case, ready to visit the rest room and clean up again. But Grace said from beside her, "Better head the other way, Doctor! I leave the run here, too, and if we don't step on it, we'll find ourselves stampeded by the boarding passengers and carried on to Atlanta!"

"Oh, no!" She hadn't thought about the plane going on. "I've got to clean up!"

"So have I! But we'll both have to wait, I'm afraid."

Diana glanced out the opened doors and saw that Grace was right. A crowd of people were already passing through the gate and hurrying to-

ward the plane. They were skirting around small water puddles, and some carried umbrellas.

"Raining?" Being from California, she had forgotten that other places had summer rains. "It looks so sunny now!"

"The showers are soon over at this time of year. It'll be nice when the airport gets the improvements finished so that passengers won't have such a far trek to their planes. But for now, Doctor, let's go!" Laughing, she led the way out and down the steps. And all Diana could do was to grab her small case, her purse, and her hat—no use to put it on now—and follow the stewardess.

She hurried down the steps, conscious of the steamy heat that greeted her, and almost collided with Grace, who had stopped at the end of the stairs. A voice addressed them impatiently.

"Was there a doctor on your flight?" a man asked sharply. "Dr. Davis? A female physician?"

"I'll say so!" Grace laughed as she stepped off the ramp, her uniform protected by a plastic coat, her shoes neatly encased in plastic boots. "She's right before you!" She waved back over her shoulder to Diana.

"You?" the man exclaimed. "*You're* Dr. Davis? Dr. Diana Davis?" He sounded both incredulous and irritated.

Diana flung back her head, and her gaze was

cool as she looked at him. He was fairly young, she noted, and rather handsome. Too darned handsome, she thought, with his slightly curly dark hair—damp now—strongly carved features, and deep-set blue eyes. Even his voice was deep and sounded like an actor's, despite the tone of impatience in it now.

Well, she was not exactly in a good mood herself! Here she was with her new shoes on and no rainboots. The only time that she had been in Florida before was in the winter; coming from California, how could she have expected rain in June?

Moreover, she was just realizing that her new suit was wrinkled and stained from the delivery, and her hands and make-up were undoubtedly a mess. There would be no chance to repair the damage before she met Dr. Timothy Henry, who had said he would meet her here. He was probably waiting in some sheltered spot, annoyed because she had been late disembarking from the plane. He had probably sent this impatient young man to hunt her up, just to save himself extra steps.

"Dr. Diana Davis?" the man repeated, as if there were something wrong about her name. He was arrogant, in fact. Too sure of himself, defying even the weather. Although he had come in the

rain, he carried no umbrella and seemed utterly unaware of the damp shirt that clung to his broad shoulders.

Suddenly all the tension of the last half hour, all the strain of the last week since she had to change all her plans—everything boiled over in anger.

"Yes, I'm Dr. Diana Davis!" she snapped. "And if you'll stop blocking my way, I'll get out of the path of these passengers who want to get on the plane!"

He stared at her an instant longer, his jaw set, then he looked her over, from her disheveled blonde head down to her high-heeled, impractically shod feet. And without a single by-your-leave, he took her case in one hand, flung the other arm about her waist, lifted her off her feet, and carried her across the damp field as impersonally as if she were a sack of meal, striding through the fast-evaporating puddles as if they didn't exist.

Fury filled Diana as she was trundled along, one hand clutching her hat, the other her purse. When he finally set her down, she wanted to flare out at him, tell him all the things she thought about him, but she knew instinctively that it would be a losing battle. This man, who probably pictured himself as a movie star or somebody im-

portant, anyway, would find a way to shut her up. Even if he didn't, all she could accomplish would be to make a spectacle of herself for the amusement of the strangers passing by.

"So you're here!" he said finally, and when she looked at him, she found him smiling. "Diana Davis! And you just delivered twins way up in the heavens! Keith Mizner got it by radio," he added.

"So? And what's that got to do with—with—" She found herself stuttering, which didn't soothe her any. She jerked her head up to take another good look at him while her anger mounted. But crazily, as she met his gaze, the words died in her throat and her fury started to recede.

She tried again, pushing back her hair with both hands as if she could straighten out her thoughts by getting her hair smoothed in place. Then she heard her own voice asking urgently, as if it were terribly important, "Who are you?"

Surprise clouded his blue eyes, then anger flared. "Who do you think I am?" he demanded indignantly. "Some lecherous fool who goes around carrying girls—strange girls at that—under his arm? I'm the one who said I'd meet you! Or had it slipped your mind? I'm Tim Henry, of course! Timothy Henry, M.D.!"

"Oh!" she replied faintly. For the first time

since she could remember, Diana was at a loss for words.

And the way Tim Henry was staring at her didn't help at all.

## 3

Tim came to his senses first. He said, grinning, "Welcome to Florida, Diana! And congratulations on the twins! Now—let me have your claim checks, and I'll pick up your baggage."

"Oh, thanks!" She opened her purse and took out the ticket receipt with its attached claim checks. Then, as her gaze swept downward, she remembered the condition of her suit, and suddenly she could smell the raw odor of birth from the stains.

"I need to go to the ladies' lounge and make a change before I arrive anywhere else. It was a quick but messy delivery."

He looked at her garb, grinned, and nodded. "I'll get your luggage right away—they take them off the plane here in a hurry. If you can tell me which piece you need right now, I can fetch it, if it comes through first."

"The smaller green bag, and I hope it gets into circulation soon!" For passersby were giving her curious looks.

"I'll hurry," he promised, and left.

Diana's gaze followed him, and when he disappeared through an entrance, she felt conscious of being alone. But he was back quickly with both cases.

"Pick out something cool and comfortable," he advised. "It'll be steamy after the rains, and we've got a fair-to-middling drive." Then he added soberly, "It would have been better if I'd sent you a ticket to Melbourne. But—well, I had an appointment here today, and I thought we'd have time to get acquainted and for me to brief you on the work we do. And once we get to our city, there won't be much time for talk, except on the work as it goes along."

"Well, you picked a good flight for me!" she laughed. "Otherwise I'd never have met those twins!"

Still laughing, she went inside the lounge and found a vacant stall. She opened her suitcase, gave brief attention to a sleeveless blouse and a pair of shorts but decided against them. At the end of the trip she would be going into a hotel or rooming house, and her initial appearance should have some dignity, at least.

She cleaned herself up, went over her make-up briefly, and brushed her hair the way it was supposed to be.

And once again, within the hour, Diana looked at her mirrored image and gave a satisfied nod.

When she came back, she found Tim watching a jet roar off, leaving a shadowy trail. He didn't know she was there until she said, "Well, I'm all ready to take off, Doctor!"

"Hi, there!" he exclaimed, his words coming out almost like a whistle. Then he repeated, louder, "*Hi,* there!" and he grinned, showing an outrageous dimple in his left cheek. "Come on, Doc! Let's get going!" His eyes danced as he picked up the luggage and led the way to a bright red sports car in the parking lot.

He opened the car door with a flourish, helped her in, and put her luggage in the back. A moment later he was sitting beside her, starting the motor. But instead of moving off, he turned to look at her.

"Diana," he said, "I dreaded this trip all morning—from here to Kaola City, I mean. Fact is, I'd sort of dreaded the trip ever since I bought that plane ticket. But I kept telling myself, 'You've got to do it! You know how much Dr. Eldred thinks of her!' But now—Diana, I apologize! I must have mixed you up with the dried-up old girl who lectured on embryology in med school! She was the first hen M.D.—excuse me, I mean the first female M.D. that I ever knew. Even the girls in my

classes didn't look like you, Diana. I never dreamed—oh, gosh, let's get going!"

He drove out of the parking lot and onto a highway that seemed remarkably free from traffic compared to the streams of cars she had become accustomed to around Los Angeles. It was, as Tim had warned her, steamy after the rains, and the sun was brassy hot.

All the same, Diana felt oddly relaxed and comfortable as she leaned back against the headrest and let the green landscape flow by. She was grateful for Tim's silence, but after a while she suddenly wanted to talk.

"Just where is Kaola City? The only other place I've ever visited in Florida is Tampa, and I never even heard about Kaola City till I was told that Dr. Eldred had settled there. I couldn't even find it on the map I brought home from Tampa."

Tim chuckled. "You need a new map. You see, Kaola City was just a crossroads place, and Canaveral was no more than a piece of the coastline until the space workers moved in. Cape Canaveral it was at first, and it brought in a lot of new folks —civilian workers and some big brass."

"You mean Kaola City's near Cape Kennedy?"

Tim nodded. "You'll live and work with your chin practically hanging over the edge of the missile base!" He grinned. "Well, not that close, but

close enough to make you get up before dawn to watch some missile heading for orbit or some men starting for the moon! At least," he added, "you'll be getting up in the dark to watch a few times, and then you'll decide that if you've seen one launching, you've seen them all, and you'll go back to sleep."

Diana shook her head slowly. "I don't think I can ever do that, Tim. I've never missed a launching on TV, if I could help it. If it came before daylight, or before I had to start working, I watched it." She was silent a moment, then went on slowly, "I never dreamed the Cape would be that close. The other time I was in Florida, it was for less than a week and we didn't do much roaming around. Anyway, I had come to see the Eldreds, and they didn't seem up to a lot of sightseeing. But I will this time!" Her drab summer suddenly looked like an exciting prospect.

"When you were here, it was wintertime, wasn't it?"

She nodded. "But don't think I felt bad about missing the sightseeing bit! The Eldreds are like family to me, you know. He was our family doctor for three generations. He helped me through the time after I lost my folks in an accident. When I wanted to go to med school and my grandparents

didn't think it wise for a girl—well, Dr. Eldred went to bat for me. I missed him badly every time I went home for a visit, but he had gone to Tampa by then."

"He came to Florida because Mrs. Eldred has arthritis, you know. He had really retired, but there's a shortage of doctors down here, and he couldn't stay idle. So he took the state boards—"

"Do I know that!" she laughed. "That happened while I was here on my short visit, and he insisted that I take them, too. Said it would be good for me to see how much I really knew."

"Well, it was lucky, because now you're licensed to practice in Florida, and right when we need you. And, Diana," he added soberly, "I'm glad you came. I can appreciate what it meant to you. I understand you had made other plans."

"Yes, I did. I'd just finished my residency at County General and had a chance to join an established clinic in one of the smaller cities near Los Angeles. But I'm glad to give Dr. Eldred a chance for a vacation. By the way, how is he? You didn't say very much."

"He's ill, Diana—a kidney condition that may be serious. He and Mrs. Eldred are in Rochester, at the Mayo Clinic."

"And *that's* his vacation?"

Tim smiled at her. "The guy wouldn't let me

give you any details that would make it impossible for you to refuse. The truth is, he really shouldn't have gone into practice down here, and maybe I'm largely to blame. You see, Kaola City needed a doctor—there's a shortage here as there is in most parts of the country. I decided to start my own practice, but I couldn't swing it alone. Financially, I mean. Then I happened to meet Eldred, and we got together. All went well, barring a few local handicaps, until his kidney condition developed." He gave Diana another broad smile. "And that's our sad story, Diana. With him gone, there is too much for me to handle alone, and he suggested you. I'm not sure but what the rascal's been trying to get you out here, by hook or by crook, all the time. Anyway, here you are, Dr. Diana!"

"Yes, here I am!" she echoed. She glanced at Tim sideways as he slowed the car to ease it over a water-filled swale that cut through the road. Strangely, her heart quickened a bit at the prospects of the coming summer, not only at the excitement of living close to the very heartbeat of the nation—the happenings at Cape Kennedy—but at the fact that Dr. Tim Henry would also be there.

## 4

The ride was hot, as Tim had predicted, but it was not unpleasant. The road ran through green meadows that were knee-high to the cattle that grazed in them. Homes were scattered. Instead of the crowding and pushing together of towns, so common in southern California, here was an abundance of space, as if Florida were casting her richness of land all about in an exuberant way.

On the main highway Tim and Diane stopped for iced tea and a breather in an air-conditioned coffee shop. Diana gave details of the twin births aloft, and they laughed together at the young mother's statement that she had been up in the air about where she wanted to give birth.

Tim said, "I'm glad it was you instead of me, Diana. OB work never was my particular dish of tea!"

"What is your special field, Tim?" Diana asked. It seemed perfectly natural that they should have reached a first-name basis so soon.

"Well, I'm a G.P. now. Just an everyday plain

general physician, a jack of all ailments, all kinds of treatments. Eventually I'd like to specialize in chest surgery. Ever since I assisted on my first Blalock and saw my first magnificent open-heart work done, I've wanted that field. Someday I'll go back and get the extra work I need for it."

"Of course you will!" she exclaimed impulsively. "It's the way I feel about surgery—surgery in general. At the clinic, where I'll go when I'm through here—they gave me a raincheck—I'll have to take the post of internist at first, but I'll assist in surgery, and as soon as there is room for another surgeon, I've been promised that post. And in time—well, neurosurgery appeals to me the way chest surgery does to you. Who knows? Maybe we'll both get what we want."

Tim nodded, but his smile was puzzled. "Somehow it seems as if you girls should get in OB or pediatrics. I mean, those fields just seem to be tailormade for you hen—you female M.D.'s."

"Now, wait!" she returned spiritedly. "You seem to think that a hen medic, as you started to call me, is good for nothing more than to deliver babies and work out infant formulas, just as some of your men do! And some of us want other things! I happen to be one who wants to do surgery!"

Their eyes met, and for a moment there was a

spark of anger between them. Then Tim chuckled. "Thanks for setting me straight, Diana. As I told you a while back, I got you mixed up with the embryology dame. She used to talk in a deep bass voice about the beauty and mystic meaning of creation!"

Diana laughed. "And I had a male teacher who looked like a hulking, burly lumberjack and talked in a husky tremolo about the deep thrill that comes when you pick up a perfect functioning newborn by the heels! And in a way," she added more seriously, "I understand him better now. I mean, today, up there, when I picked up the first twin—she was so tiny, yet so strong, so—so self-sufficient. Tim, she cried without being spanked! She took her first breath on her own and *cried!*" Diana drew a long breath and went on in low tones, "It was the first time I'd ever truly experienced it—that feeling of elation that Dr. Weiman tried to describe."

Tim nodded. "It's a great thrill, Diana, but if we all felt the same way about it, the field would be overcrowded. I think Dr. Eldred liked it. When we opened the office in Kaola City, he just seemed to gravitate to that part of being a doctor. I mean, we found that he was taking over the gravidas and the kids. I think the women just naturally preferred him to me. He assisted me on the

surgical work, and, of course, he took over a lot of other cases, but he sure had a lot of gravidas lined up in a short time."

"He was an old hand at it, Tim. I was one of his deliveries, you know."

"One of what he called his special deliveries! Looks like he did a good job—and provided himself with somebody to take over when he needed to get away this summer!" There was a short silence, then he continued, "I may as well be honest, Diana. You won't find things too ideal here. We've got a situation that complicates matters."

"Yes?"

"Yes. For three or four generations all the land around Kaola City belonged to one family, the Clydons. Finally it all came down to one person—Melissa Clydon, who never married. I don't know how the other branches of the family got shoved out, but they did, and Melissa got it all. Her heir was a nephew, Alexander. Dr. Alexander Clydon."

"I met him today. He was on the plane, but I didn't know there was another doctor aboard until after it was all over and the plane had landed and was nearly empty."

"That would be Lex. He didn't want to soil his hands. Anyway, he got everything that Melissa had. He wasn't supposed to, though. Melissa in-

tended to give the community a badly needed hospital. She wanted the old Clydon home place, with its building and ten good acres, to be a hospital, and to be called the Melissa Clydon Memorial Hospital. And she left a trust fund to amply provide for all it would ever need."

"Then you do have a hospital to work in?"

"No. Melissa made the mistake of stipulating that Lex Clydon be the chairman of the board, and that all monies drawn from the trust fund should first have his okay—as well as all matters of policy."

"In other words," Diana observed shrewdly, "she made the big gesture of giving the hospital as a fine memorial for herself, yet she made sure that it was to be kept in the family."

"Right! And it's been just that. In some way, before folks woke up to what was going on, Lex Clydon got a board elected whose members don't know hospital procedure from a Chinese oration! And they couldn't care less. So they go to board meetings and do whatever Lex Clydon suggests. Then they collect their fees for serving on the board—he was clever about that—and go home."

"Then the hospital isn't functioning? Couldn't the community appeal to the courts?"

"Oh, it's functioning, but it's nothing more than a private bailiwick for Lex and the few doc-

tors he has chosen for his staff. Young yes-men, mostly. Eager-beaver M.D.'s whose sole ambitions are to get ahead fast, drive big cars, acquire all the status symbols—and do all this without much hard work. They get paid plenty at Melissa Clydon Memorial; the only patients accepted there are those who can pay high fees."

"But that's not ethical!"

"Well, some of the M.D.'s today seem to be writing a new book on ethics, Diana. They argue that medicine is big business and should be conducted that way. They don't speak of the art of healing very often. What concerns them is how many afternoons a week they can take off—and God help the patient who gets sick on weekends or late at night!"

Diana nodded soberly. "I've met some like that, Tim. But this hospital—how does Clydon get away with it?"

"He holds all the aces when anybody tries to fight him. After all, the hospital does serve the community—the monied part. It's functioning. Many rooms are filled with obstetric patients—some from miles away, because it's smart to go there. They all get private rooms, telephones, special nurses, so it's become a thing of prestige for those who can afford it. Then there are women caught in the menopause, afraid of old age,

nervous enough to want a smooth guy like Lex to tell 'em it isn't so! Nervous breakdowns—that's how they're entered in the books. And others, so help me, are only there because they want Lex's tender encouragement while they trim off a few pounds!"

"No surgery?"

"Oh, yes. They have a couple of surgeons on the staff. Appendectomies, suspensions—there are no tissues to go to the lab and maybe call them to account in a suspension, you know. And I almost forgot! There's the plastic surgery that Lex does. Not the wholesome kind that will help a man get a better job or let some forlorn girl attract a husband for herself. No, Lex lifts sagging faces on these neurotics of his. Oh, the whole mess makes me sick! All that beautiful equipment—the hospital has the very latest of everything—and the ordinary folks have to travel almost thirty miles to a hospital!"

"There must be some way to break it down!" Diana exclaimed. "He can't refuse admission to a patient—at least a patient who has money or insurance—"

"He can if they're full up, and he has enough clientele to keep it that way. Besides, if a patient should get admitted and be made to feel uncomfortable enough so that he doesn't want to

stay, that won't help, either. The thing is, the ordinary patient doesn't enter a hospital unless he's really sick, and a doctor can't risk a knock-down, drag-out fight when his patient is the one who'll suffer."

"Well, there should be some way—there'll *have* to be some way!" Diana declared.

Tim reached across the table and caught her hand. "You find that way, Diana, and we'll fight it through! I've got a feeling that if anybody can find it, you'll be the one!"

His fingers closed over hers, and Diana felt a tingling warmth, like a small shock of electricity, spread up her arm.

For a full moment they sat that way, then suddenly she knew a queer panic. Gently she pulled her hand free, pushed back her empty tea glass, then picked up her purse.

Tim said, "I guess it *is* time to shove on!" and he went up to the cashier to pay the bill.

# 5

The sign read: "Kaola City, 3 miles." The road curved around a big hill, then Tim drew off the road and stopped, pointing to a group of buildings that were shining in the afternoon sun. "That's it," he said. "That's the Meliss' Memorial Hospital. With all their private rooms, they're only a sixty-bed operation now, I'm told, but it should be a hundred. It could easily be enlarged without spoiling the picture, by a wing on each side. It'd be big enough to serve the whole community."

"It's beautiful!" Diana exclaimed. The dazzling white structure was a rambling three-story Colonial mansion overlooking landscaped grounds that sloped down to a lake, one of the many that dons the length of Florida like a silver ornament on a bright green cloak. High old palms, ancient magnolias, and numerous other trees unfamiliar to Diana were grouped about the grounds; brilliant tropical blooms splashed their color among the lower-bushed shrubs.

There were other buildings, too, all the same dazzling white. "Room enough for the whole staff —nurses' home and all," Tim said. "Seems that in the past, whenever a Clydon married, the old folks just built another house close by. In fact, Diana, everything that could be needed to conduct a fine modern hospital is right here before our eyes!"

She nodded, and Tim went on, "Their equipment is new and thoroughly modern. And yet if one of our patients had a hot appendix, we'd either have to send him jolting over to another hospital or have to operate in the office and then send him jolting. And by the way," he added, "Dr. Eldred brought down his equipment, and then we bought some things, so we've got a good surgery setup. But we still need a hospital nearby."

"This situation is not right!" Diana declared emphatically.

Tim started the car and Diana leaned back, watching the outskirts of her new home emerge. Her temporary new home, she corrected herself. Someday, later in the summer when Dr. Eldred was back, she would be riding over this same road on her way to catch a plane home to California.

Strangely, the thought brought little comfort.

They came to the bright new homes that were

the outskirts of Kaola City. Tim said, half apologetically, "Look, Diana, we took the liberty of finding quarters for you—an efficiency apartment. It's air-conditioned, and we thought it would give you a chance to look around till you find something that suits you better."

"Why, thanks, Tim!" She had somehow dreaded going to a hotel, where there would be so few real chances to relax. "I appreciate your doing that."

"Val thought you'd like it better. Valerie Kerr, our office nurse, and a mighty fine one. It's not far from the office, and after you get unloaded, let's run out to an early dinner. Then you'll have the evening free to unpack."

Diana liked that, too, even though, after the hearty lunch served on the plane, she really had little appetite.

The apartment was just beyond the edge of town; it was a motel apartment, one of a long row that opened onto a covered porch. And it was on the oceanfront. Tim nosed his car alongside a blue Olds that stood before Cabin Seven. "That's Eldred's car," he explained. "You're to use it, Diana. Val left the keys on the coffee table inside."

He took a tagged key from his pocket, opened

the apartment door, then went for the rest of her luggage. Diana went inside, looking around approvingly. The place was tastefully furnished and as neat as a pin. A living room with a daybed, sliding doors that hid a chest of drawers, a mirror, an area to hang clothes. One door led into a tiled bath, another into a small kitchen, adequately furnished.

Opening the refrigerator door, Diana found milk, cream, eggs, butter—all the things she might need soon. In the cupboard over the sink were a few canned goods.

"Tim, this is wonderful!" she exclaimed as he brought in the luggage. "A home, all equipped, and right on the beach!"

"Val put in the supplies. She thought that tomorrow being Sunday, you'd like to stay in and rest."

"Val must be wonderfully efficient," she remarked. Remembering Dr. Eldred's former nurses, Diana could almost picture this Valerie Kerr. In her late thirties or early forties, with gray in her hair. Experienced, intelligent, kind, but firm.

"Val's quite a gal!" Tim agreed. Then, coming to stand beside Diana, he repeated, "Diana, I really *am* glad you came!" The way he flung his arm about her could merely have been a friendly

gesture, but the look in his eyes was warm. "It's going to be a great experience working with you."

"Thanks, Tim," she returned, low, because she didn't trust her voice to speak out naturally. "I'm going to like it, too."

For a long moment they stood there, an awareness growing between them, an awareness that was electric, making the very air about them tingle. Diana felt suddenly unsure of herself and a bit frightened, and she made herself draw away from Tim. She fought to find her voice and hold it natural.

"If you'll wait in the car, Tim, I'll change before supper."

"Why bother, Diana? You look wonderful. Anyway, the place we're going to isn't an especially dressy one." Once started, he, too, seemed glad to talk. Maybe he wanted to dispel the strange electricity that had built up during the past few moments. "It's called the Blastoff, honoring the old Cape you can see from your front porch." He drew her to the front doorway and pointed to a shadowy dark spire that rose from an even more shadowy coastline some miles away.

"The Cape's that close?" she marveled.

"That close!" he echoed. "And on Monday morning, if you want to get up around three

o'clock, you can go out to your porch and watch a missile start off for space!" He went through the door. "I'll wait in the car, Diana, but, as I said, there's no need to change. You really look grand!"

A missile going into orbit—that was, oddly, like Diana felt as she stood before the bathroom mirror refreshing her make-up. Maybe that was why she had those strange feelings, a moment ago. Certainly she was no schoolgirl to thrill to the friendly touch of a man's arm over her shoulder! There had always been companionship between her and her fellow students during her years at med school. Maybe here, so near the Cape, there was a special excitement in the air that drew people together. Well, whatever it was, she liked it!

She smiled as she went out to join Tim Henry.

They were quiet as they drove back to the town and stopped before the office, a trim one-story building with a neat sign in the window. They got out, and she went with Tim to the front door. "Probably locked," Tim observed. "We're usually closed Saturday afternoons, but Val was going to stay a while and clean up. And she must still be here," he addded as he tried the door and found it open.

They went inside, and Diana saw a waiting

room with cool-looking wicker furniture, a low table piled with books, and a cooling system that made the whole atmosphere very comfortable. From the waiting room they went into a hallway lighted by a skylight and from which several doors opened.

"The office on your left"—Tim pointed to an open door through which a desk, a chair, and other equipment were revealed—"is my office. Dr. Eldred's is across the hall there." He pointed toward another door, which was closed. "Then"—taking Diana's arm—"there's a small surgery room just beyond his office, where we do a few minor emergency cases. All the same, it's well-stocked with Eldred's equipment. Across the hall is a treatment room, and at the end—" He walked her down to it and gently pushed her inside. "Well, here's the most used part, I think!" Diana looked around and saw a tiny kitchenette with a small table, a built-in cupboard, a sink, and an electric plate that held a coffeepot.

"All the comforts of home." Tim grinned. "And in the supply cupboard over there we keep practically everything we need for any emergency—as well as some extra food! And—"

He broke off. A figure had suddenly appeared in the doorway, a slim figure in a nurse's uniform. Shining coppery hair gleamed under the white

cap, framing a lovely face that was creamy-skinned in the delicate way that often goes with that shade of hair. The girl's eyes were jade green, and strange lights flickered in them as they met Diana's gaze.

"Why, Val!" Tim exclaimed. "How come you're here so late on Saturday afternoon?"

"I stayed to finish the paperwork—all those darned insurance forms! And, after all—" She looked at him, sending some silent message that made him draw a quick breath, as if remembering something, and that also made Diana feel decidedly like the third party. It was a feeling she hated.

Tim came suddenly to life. "Diana, this is Val—Valerie Kerr. And, Val, this is Diana Davis—Dr. Davis—" He seemed to be floundering in his search for words.

Val said calmly, "I'm glad to meet you, Dr. Davis." Her tones were completely professional.

"Thank you," Diana returned, just as evenly. "And I'm glad to have this chance to thank you for getting my apartment ready. It was kind of you."

For an instant they stood there looking at each other while Tim watched, his eyes wary, a puzzled frown on his face.

Diana maintained her composure as she walked

toward the door, passing Val, who stood aside for her. She went on to the office that was to be hers, then stood there, her composure dissolving into the anger that was rising within her. A queer anger it was, and entirely unreasonable. Certainly she had no cause to go shaky inside just because the office nurse turned out to be younger and more beautiful than she had expected. It was crazy to feel this way.

To get her thoughts back into focus, she looked at the large framed picture that hung above the big flat-topped desk. At least it probably was a picture, but right now the gleaming late-afternoon sun made a mirror of the glass in the frame. And an effective mirror it was, reflecting all too clearly the scene in the hallway behind her.

Valerie Kerr was standing very close to Tim Henry, so close that Tim's arms were about her. And before Diana could draw her gaze away, he bent his head and kissed the coppery-haired nurse.

It wasn't a long kiss, but the very casualness of it showed plainly to Diana that this was not the first kiss that Tim Henry had bestowed on Valerie Kerr.

Reasonable or not, the anger stayed with Diana. She moved over to the window, her hands clenched as she tried to fight down the emotion

that made her feel quivery inside. Suddenly she went into the waiting room with some idea of getting out of the office and away. It would be a silly, childish thing to do, reason tried to tell her, but at that minute reason held a slack rein and rode precariously in the saddle of her rampaging fury.

Then the front door opened. A man's head was stuck inside. "What's the big idea, keeping open on a Saturday afternoon?" a voice yelled. "Want to undermine the save-yourself-work code? The one set up by the American Medical Society?"

"Hi, Keith!" came Tim's shout. "What the heck are you doing here?" Then Diana recognized the visitor, who came inside and closed the door behind him. It was the Air Force M.D., Keith Mizner.

He saw Diana at the same instant. "Hi, you're just the gal I'm looking for!" he exclaimed, and came toward her. She saw that he wasn't as young as he had seemed in his blue medical outfit. And he was much better-looking. His uniform fitted a broad-shouldered, slim-hipped frame, and his sun-streaked blond hair was thick and slightly curly despite its close crop.

"There are birth certificates for you to sign," he went on, "and a heck of a lot of other papers."

"Why couldn't you mail 'em?" Tim demanded. "Of all the crazy trips just to get some papers

signed! Don't tell me you have to turn 'em in that quick!"

Keith merely grinned and kept his gaze on Diana. "I thought you'd like to hear about your multiple B.O.A.'s. Even if they were born out of asepsis, they're the pride and joy of the base hospital already! Nurses are fighting to be isolated with 'em. The little girl weighed five pounds on the dot. The boy ran up to six pounds ten. Healthy as horses, and the tiny girl's rootin' for food already! Mama's doing fine, too."

"And the father?" Diana smiled, remembering the frantic young man. It wasn't even hard to smile, because she had her temper in hand now. "How is he?"

"We're not sure of him yet. His wife hadn't remembered to warn him there'd be two, so it was a shock to the poor kid."

"We're just going out for something to eat," Tim said. "How about joining us?"

Relief was in his tone, probably because if he got Keith to join them, the situation with Val would be easier. And Val undoubtedly had good reason to expect Tim to take her out that evening. It could even be a standing date.

The nurse stood there smiling, evidently certain that Diana had found out that she herself would be the extra girl.

Well, I'll take the edge off that bit of triumph, Diana thought. She turned to Keith and spoke before he could answer Tim. "Do come, Keith!" Then, smiling at Tim, she added with graciousness, "And why doesn't Val come, too? She's been working here all afternoon and deserves a bit of fun. So let's *all* go."

"Sure!" Tim agreed heartily, but his eyes held that wary, puzzled look again as he stared from one girl to the other. He seemed to sense something was wrong, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

But Valerie knew. Diana caught the angry look the nurse sent her way. By extending the invitation, Diana had made it *her* party, with Val the outsider—which undoubtedly was precisely what Val had meant to do with Diana.

Keith had noticed nothing. He said cheerfully, "Fine! And I tell you what—we won't wait to sign any papers now, Diana. We'll eat, and after that I'll drive you home and we can do the heavy work then. Or I can even drive back another time."

"That's okay," Diana said. "Better get things signed tonight and start those twins off right! But as for eating, why not go now?"

She felt Tim's gaze upon her and turned. He was angry; his eyes were murky with it, and his mouth was tight. After all, he had invited her out

to eat and had expected to take her home, and the fact that he had forgotten whatever arrangement he had with Valerie Kerr didn't keep him from being angry about Diana's acting this way.

"Well, then, let's get going!" he growled. "Get your cap off, Val!"

Val nodded and went toward the hallway. A few feet along it she stopped, her hands busy with her cap, her gaze going to an open door, the door to Diana's office. A queer elation flared in the redhead's eyes, and Diana realized the truth.

Val had known about the way the picture turned into a mirror when the sun struck it right. She had made sure that Diana saw her in Tim's arms. And she had made either a declaration of rights or a declaration of war.

Diana looked questioningly across the waiting room to Tim and wondered, as she had wondered about others during these past few years, how a man could be smart enough to be a doctor of medicine yet be so incredibly dense about women.

# 6

The first day at the office was truly a Blue Monday. The starting day in any new post is always difficult, Diana told herself, but even her first day as an intern, with everybody watching to see how the new female M.D. made out, was not as bad as this.

For one thing, she was tired. Recalling what Tim had said about the missile launching, she had set her alarm for two-forty-five that morning; she got up at its summons, slipped into a robe, and went outside, fighting mosquitoes as she waited, her eyes fixed on the spot where Cape Kennedy curved into the sea.

Nobody else was around. It was probably as Tim had said: after you had seen one or two, you would wish the launching well and stay abed.

Then, suddenly, she was not alone. First there was the plop-plop of hooves in the soft sand, then the horse and rider emerged from the shadows. They came down the narrow road in front of the motel, and as they drew abreast of Diana, the rider stopped.

A girl's voice asked, "Are you waiting to see the blastoff?" When Diana nodded in the affirmative, the girl went on, "This isn't a good place for that."

Her voice was firm and mature-sounding, but when she dismounted and came closer, the light streaming out from Diana's window showed her to be a young girl, slim and pretty, but with the child's soft cheekline that sometimes lingers into first youth. About sixteen, Diana decided, or possibly still fifteen.

"Come on!" the girl urged. "I'll show you the best place of all."

"Oh, thanks!" Diana said, and went along with her.

They walked onto the beach and turned south for a while, then the girl led the horse into a sheltered cove and tied it securely to a tree. "The lights, when they blast off, always frighten Tosca," she explained, and then, as if by giving the horse's name more was required, she finished simply, "I'm Carolyn."

"And I'm Diana." She followed the simplicity of the girl's introduction, not wanting, anyway, to put a barrier of title between them. "I appreciate your telling me where to come to watch. I'm new here."

"I know. Well, let's get down to the beach—over by that bunch of bushes. It's almost time."

They walked over and waited, not talking, but with a quiet companionship between them.

It was worth waiting for, the moment when a fire was kindled on the low horizon, a fire that leaped upward in thin high flames, spreading out across the skyline. The fire grew continually brighter and higher, arrowing through billowing darker, higher clouds, until the whole eastern sky seemed to burn. And still the blaze kept rising.

How many minutes the sky blazed, Diana didn't know, but she must have held her breath all through it, for when the light began to fade, she was conscious of a cramped feeling in her lungs, and her first long breath rasped painfully in her throat.

Still they stood there, watching the bright arching cone of light disappear somewhere into the unknown heights. Then Carolyn said huskily, "That's all—for us. But the missile and the ones inside it just go on, experiencing things we'll never know, collecting information for the men who'll follow it, and even go farther. But we just have to wait down here . . . wait in the dark." There was bitterness and hurt in her voice, and Diana turned quickly, as if she had heard a call for help.

"Carolyn," she began, but the girl interrupted her lightly.

"We may as well go," she said. "That's all there is—there isn't any more!" She started toward her horse, Diana following.

When they reached Diana's apartment, Diana asked, "Won't you come in for a bit? I'll make some hot chocolate."

"Thanks, but I need to hurry home. If I don't, I'll get chewed out plenty!" The girl's voice was bitter again.

Diana watched Carolyn swing easily into the saddle, then ride away. Even though she had spent a short time with the girl, Diana felt as if a bit of her heart were being pulled along with the departure of the obviously lonely young girl.

After that Diana was much too awake to go back to sleep. Soon after daylight she was out on the beach again, reviving herself with a short swim. It helped, but it didn't take away the dread of that first day. Having to meet Tim Henry again, and Valerie Kerr. The memory of Saturday night was too fresh in her thoughts.

The four of them—Tim, Keith, Val, and herself—went to the Blastoff Inn. It was a quaint beach place, and the ocean breeze drove away the

hovering humidity, so they ate the excellent food in total comfort.

Tim had been in the service for a time with Keith, it turned out; that was where their acquaintance began. Tim wasn't too lively at times, but Keith was; he had gaiety enough for them all.

It should have been a good time, but it wasn't. Beneath the laughter and the gay banter was an undercurrent of hostility that only Keith missed. Tim's mouth tightened whenever he met Diana's gaze, and Val's eyes did not hide her resentment, which was mingled with a bit of triumph.

Diana wasn't sure just how she herself felt, but beneath her bright manner she was decidedly stirred up. And what happened after dinner didn't help, either. Keith took her home, stopping a little way from the motel in a sheltered spot that looked out over the sea.

He slipped an arm about her and drew her head to his shoulder. It might have been a restful few moments of companionship before they said good night. But Keith, unfortunately, had other ideas. He caught her closer and then was kissing her, too fervently and in far too demanding a way.

"For heaven's sake, Keith!" Diana exclaimed when she could pull herself away and get her breath. "I'm too tired for a wrestling match! If you'll leave those papers for me to sign, Doctor,

I'll mail them to you tonight." She pointed to a mailbox close by.

Keith swore under his breath but dropped his arms and straightened up. "I'm sorry," he said sharply. "I hadn't realized that you were *that* tired all at once!" He pulled a brown Manila envelope from his pocket. "Here are the papers, and thank you, Doctor!" Then, with no further words, he started the motor and drove up to her apartment.

In the same stiff manner he got out, came around to her side and helped her out, then walked with her to the door. Diana unlocked it, stepped inside, and suddenly laughed.

"Oh, this is silly—your leaving in such a huff! Especially after such a nice evening. It *was* a nice evening, Keith!" She realized, all at once, how dismal the time would have been with just Tim and Valerie if Keith hadn't shown up. It would have been Diana's first experience as an extra girl, and Valerie Kerr would have kept her feeling that way.

"Thanks, Keith, for coming," she finished softly. Then, standing on her tiptoes, she kissed him gently and in friendly fashion.

His hands caught hers and held them tightly. "The thanks belong to you, Diana," he said husk-

ily. "And forgive me for getting out of line. I—you're grand, Diana! I'd like to see you again."

"I hope you will, Keith," she returned, and went inside, glad she had not sent him away angry. But when the sound of Keith's departure had died away and she stood there alone in the new apartment, she had a crazy thought about Tim and Valerie Kerr. How were *they* saying good night? Still more crazily, she felt a flare of anger that diminished to a sense of desolation.

The feeling stayed with her over the weekend and was still heavy when she drove to the office. Val was already there, efficient and professional, on the surface, at least.

"Good morning, Doctor!" she greeted her casually. "Your morning is booked pretty full because we had to postpone some of the regulars till you got here. I can give you some help. Thank goodness you don't need a nurse with you every minute to protect your reputation!" she added, laughing.

"Being a female has its advantages," Diana agreed, falling into Val's strictly doctor-nurse attitude.

"I think you'll find everything on your desk," Val went on, and Diana thanked her as she went on to the office that would be hers.

She slipped on the crisp white jacket and replaced her high-heeled pumps with more comfortable flats. Then, taking her stethoscope from her bag—a gesture of almost pure habit—she put it around her neck, then sat at her desk to size up the morning's duties.

Valerie Kerr was well trained. There was no denying that. Diana's appointments were legibly entered into the appointment book. The charts were piled beside it in the order of each patient's appearance; evidently there were no new patients on this morning's list.

Diana glanced through the first three charts to familiarize herself with the patients. OB's, all three. Quickly she went through the others. Two more gravidas and two infants to be checked.

She looked up, frowning, as Tim appeared in her doorway. "Good morning!" he said a bit stiffly. Then, evidently noting her frown, he asked quickly, "Is anything wrong?"

She shrugged. "I suppose not. But I see that I have nothing but OB's and pediatrics."

"Yes. I told you that Dr. Eldred had taken over that branch. It was as much as he could handle, in fact."

"Well, I'm able-bodied and willing." She grinned. After all, there was no need to carry per-

sonal resentment into the office. "I can take over my full share of the work load."

"Thanks, Diana," Tim returned gruffly, "but I can handle the rest. And after all, this should be your own dish of tea—working with women and kids."

"Why?" she demanded. "I'm in general practice the same as you are! I told you that when I met you!" Then, standing up, she asked bluntly, "Don't you consider me capable of doing the work?"

He was quiet for a moment, his mouth clamped tight as if he were biting back the words he wanted to say. Finally he spoke. "Why should we discuss that? Regardless of Women's Lib, you're a female and should be interested in helping your own sex—in everything in this particular field!"

"You've said something like that before!" Diana flared, and then went on furiously, "If you don't consider me an able physician, then why did you ask me to come here?"

"It was Eldred's idea. I—I mean—well, he wanted you, and—for Pete's sake so did I, so—"

Before he could find the words to finish with, Valerie appeared in the doorway, smiling pleasantly but with a wicked gleam of amusement in her eyes. "Your first patient is ready, Dr. Davis," she announced.

"Thank you," Diana returned crisply, and turned away, dismissing Tim Henry and all his infuriating typically male ideas. A moment later she went into the treatment room behind her office. A very young female, whose wedding ring still held its first shininess, lay draped on the table.

"Oh, Doctor, I can hardly believe it's really true!" she exclaimed, her voice exultant. "I mean —that I'm going to have a baby!"

Diana smiled, and her turmoil died down as she pulled on the sterile rubber gloves. There was, in truth, some pleasure in handling pregnant young women, she told herself, remembering the twin births on the plane. She might miss the sharp sense of being hand in hand with God that came when the knife worked out its shining miracle, but there was another satisfaction, too, in just standing by to watch the miracle of creation unfold.

"It's true, dear," she told the girl. "True, and wonderful."

Sometimes the wonder could be shadowed, Diana discovered later that morning. Her last patient before lunch was a girl only a year older than the pregnant bride, but the eyes of Maria Hastie held fear as well as tenderness when she mentioned her coming baby.

"How long can I work, Doctor?" she asked.

"You see, Georgie—my husband—was out of work for so long! We haven't even got Jeanie's bill—she's my first baby—paid out yet. We lived farther north when she was born, but we had to come here so we could live with Mama and she could care for Jeanie, since we both had to work. I'm a waitress at a restaurant out on the highway, and Georgie's got a job there, too, but we're so behind!" Her voice broke.

"Don't worry too much, please—for the new baby's sake."

"I know, but—oh, just when it looked like we were going to catch up, then—" She stopped, then went on quickly, "Oh, I *will* love this new baby, but if it just could have waited a little." She wiped at the tears that rolled down her cheek.

Diana patted her arm. "You'll be all right, Maria." She liked the thin, big-eyed girl, poorly dressed but immaculate. "There's an old saying, you know—that each baby brings its own bag of gold. You and your Georgie will find a way because you're that kind of folks. And don't worry about your bill here, Maria. Not till you're well able to take care of it." She felt safe in giving that assurance, knowing it was what Dr. Eldred would say. "You're only three months along, Maria, and you should be able to work until the last few weeks if your employer doesn't mind your preg-

nancy. If he does, maybe he'll help you find a place somewhere else. And I'll do all I can to keep you well, but you must come here regularly."

Maria's face brightened. "You're so kind!" she said, and again Diana had that feeling of reward.

# 7

The heavy load of appointments lasted through the first three days, and then, as the postponed appointments were caught up with, Diana found the regular schedule too light, too routine. She felt almost useless and very frustrated because all her hard-earned knowledge, her painstakingly acquired experience in other fields of medicine, seemed to count for nothing.

What made it worse, her slack hours seemed useless, too. Tim was overburdened with work, some of which was surgery, where he could use an assistant, but he didn't ask her to help him out. If he had done that, Diana would become familiar with the cases and could have made some of the hospital calls. As it was, he had to leave early to make the long drive, and he depended on one of the doctors near the hospital to fill in on emergency calls.

She was here to take Dr. Eldred's place, and Dr. Eldred and Tim Henry were associates, sharing a practice. Instead of depending on her, as he

should—as he would if she had not been a female—Tim was ignoring her. They were two doctors in two separate practices, in two widely diverse fields. She was given the things Tim did not care to do, even though she had told him how she felt about it. Why shouldn't Tim share in everything? Didn't he know that a G.P. was supposed to deliver babies and treat colicky infants as well as perform brilliant surgery?

The more Diana thought about it—and she had plenty of time to think—the more her anger developed. Perhaps it was just as well that she and Tim saw little of each other. When they did meet, in the hallway or in the parking lot, they always seemed to be going in different directions, and there was a feeling of constraint between them. And an exaggerated politeness that warned of a possible clash.

Tim was always preoccupied, and usually he was with Valerie, upon whom he was not ashamed to depend.

Valerie didn't add any calmness to the situation. She rarely helped Diana now that the first busy period was over. Val gave all her attention to Tim, and sometimes when Diana saw her follow Tim into his office, perhaps taking him a cup of coffee, she could have slapped the pert face beneath the starched white cap. Val probably knew

how she felt, for sometimes her eyes held a taunting look as she glanced demurely at Diana.

That Val dared to think Diana cared about what Tim Henry did only served to build up Diana's frustration and anger.

Toward the end of the second week Tim was forced to work with Diana. It was during the noontime lunch break. Valerie had gone to lunch with Marcy Leeman, a dental nurse who worked across the street. Tim left for a service-club lunch, and Diana decided that all she wanted was a glass of iced coffee. She had not yet acquired the fortitude that gave Floridians the strength to live in the summer heat unabashed.

She was in the tiny kitchenette, piling ice cubes into a tall glass, when she heard a crash outside. As she ran out of the office, she saw a blue car with its front end jammed against the rear of a large truck that had a load of small steel pipes protruding out of it, marked by a red flag.

Shattered glass made the street glimmer under the brassy noon sun. A man shouted, "My God! There's a boy in the car bleeding like a stuck pig!"

It was not a pretty expression, nor was it a pretty sight. A youth, about sixteen, was crum-

pled over the wheel, his streaked blond hair wet with blood.

"Stay back, lady!" a middle-aged man ordered importantly. "If you want to do something, go call a doctor. And an ambulance. And tell 'em to rush!"

"I am a doctor," Diana said crisply, and managed to open the car door to examine the boy better. A long deep gash on his left arm was spurting out the blood that was staining his hair. Her fingers traced the main artery and dug ruthlessly into the flesh above the wound, and the flow of blood lessened. Holding his arm, she looked around, then reached with her free hand and grabbed the neatly folded handkerchief from the shirt pocket of the middle-aged man.

"Fold it cornerwise, then twist it into a long tight roll!" she instructed, and when this was done, she had him pass it around the boy's arm just above the spot where her fingers staunched the flow. When the handkerchief was tied tightly, she took her pen, stuck it under the tourniquet, and by twisting it, tightened the bandage as much as she dared.

That accomplished, she made what further examination she could without moving the youth. He seemed to have no head injuries. When she lifted one lid to examine the pupil, both eyes flew

open. "Oh, Lord, the blood!" the boy exclaimed in a sick voice, and promptly fainted. Diana gave a nod as she finished her quick examination. There seemed only one wound to handle.

The ambulance swung alongside, its siren dying on a thin wail. The driver climbed out and came to look in on the young fellow. "Where does he go to?" he asked. "Hospital—or Bechter's?" naming the local undertaking establishment. Then, giving her no chance to answer, he went on, "Say, that's Eddy Kalish! I knew darned well he'd bust his neck someday, the way he drives. Well, if somebody here'll help me—I'm alone today—I'll get him to the hospital."

"Get your stretcher!" Diana ordered sharply. "Take him into the office here—he needs attention right now." Again she had to identify herself. "I'm Dr. Davis."

The attendant stared, open-mouthed, then went to get the stretcher. Carefully, under her directions, he and the middle-aged man took the youth from the car, laid him gently on the stretcher, and wheeled him inside the office and back to the surgery room. There they put him onto the table.

"Watch him a moment, please," she told the attendant as she went to wash up, then get the supplies she would need. If only Valerie were

here, she thought. Val knew where all the supplies and the instruments were that Diana would need. And Val would help. It would be a hard job alone.

"Diana!" cried Tim's voice from the doorway. "I heard at the club that there was an accident—a blue car right here by the office—"

Diana's dread vanished, and a crazy warmth filled her. Tim had thought it was her car and had come immediately. "I'm glad you're here," she said, and smiled at him.

Now that two pairs of hands were there, it wasn't such a difficult job. They worked almost without words, each anticipating the next move, following up, clamping the torn artery, suturing the severed ends. The artery was too badly torn to be joined, but a secondary vessel would expand to take over the load.

They found the smaller bleeders and tied them off, then suctioned away the clotting blood, cleaned the wound with a final thoroughness and made still an extra search after they discovered a tiny knife-sharp shard from the broken windshield.

At last they were finished, the wound closed with careful tiny stitches to avoid a bad scar. They moved the patient to the bed at one side, and started him on saline solution intravenously.

"We'll have to wait till we check with his parents about the tetanus shot," Diana observed. "Maybe he'll just need a booster." The middle-aged man had taken over the job of locating the boy's parents.

They arrived shortly after, a well-dressed, middle-aged pair who acted somewhat defensive, as if they expected to be blamed for their son's accident.

Tim introduced Diana and himself, then said, "Your son cut his arm badly, severing a main artery, but it's been cared for already. He's getting saline now to make up for the blood he lost. He also needs a tetanus shot—but whether booster or an initial shot, we didn't know. After the shot you can take him home safely."

"Home?" the woman echoed. Then, to her husband, "With all the company coming for this weekend, how can we take him home? He'll have to go to the hospital, David, where they can make him stay quiet and keep a good eye on him."

"That's right," her husband agreed after a moment's thought. "He'll be close enough to home so we can run in and see him."

"Which hospital shall I call?" Tim asked in cool tones.

The woman answered, "Melissa Clydon, of course! I'll take care of it myself."

As she went into Tim's office to phone, Tim's gaze met Diana's. Mrs. Kalish would soon discover that these days it took a doctor to enter a patient into a hospital. But Mrs. Kalish dialed, then spoke with great confidence. "Dr. Clydon, please! This is Mrs. David Kalish."

Several minutes later she came back to Tim and Diana. "Dr. Clydon is sending the hospital ambulance right away. If we hurry, we can still make the luncheon, David."

The man looked at her, started to say something, then merely sighed.

"Don't you want to see your son?" Diana asked.

The woman frowned, but the man nodded. "Of course!" he said, and took his wife's arm as they followed Tim down the hall to where the boy lay. They stayed with him only a few minutes, then left just as a very expensive-looking ambulance drove up and two smartly uniformed attendants appeared with the stretcher. One handed Tim a clipboard and asked that he write down what had been done for the boy.

Tim obliged, adding, "He still needs tetanus," and in no time at all Eddy Kalish was being driven away in stylish fashion.

"It seems that Clydon Memorial still accepts emergency cases, after all," Diana remarked.

"From the better families only. Anyway, how about some coffee? I missed lunch, you know."

"Come to think of it, so did I!"

Tim moved closer to Diana, and something in his gaze caused her to catch her breath. He said, low, "You were really wonderful, Diana. I *liked* working with you."

"You said, on our way from the plane that first day, that you were going to like working with me. But—well, somehow—"

"I know." His arms went about her and pulled her close. "You were wonderful," he repeated, and then he bent his head and kissed her. It was a gentle, friendly kiss, yet a warm one, lighting the moment. Diana felt quick tears sting her eyes.

This was indeed a high moment, she knew. It was the moment when she could again ask Tim to let her share the work, to give her a chance to show him how well she could do. She wanted this, not only to keep up with the experience she needed but also to impress Tim, to make him realize that being a woman made no difference in her ability as a doctor. Yes, she was sure that this was the moment to speak, and maybe she was right. Maybe it would have been just such a moment to bring peace between them, if it had not been dashed so abruptly.

The door opened. Valerie's excited voice called out, and Tim pulled away from Diana just as Val came hurrying in.

"Tim, what happened?" she cried. "I just heard that there was an accident—here! A blue Olds—"

"It wasn't my car," Diana said shortly, and Tim explained, "It was a boy named Eddy Kalish. He got first-aid here and then was taken to Clydon Memorial in their fancy ambulance."

"Oh!" Val said, and looked from Tim to Diana almost accusingly.

Diana said, "I'll have to hurry if I'm to get my coffee before the P.M. appointments."

She went into the kitchenette, and as she turned on the hot plate to warm the coffee, she heard whispers in the hallway. Whispers, then a short silence. But it was long enough for Diana to jerk herself out of her haze so that when Tim came in, she could ask calmly, "May I fix coffee for you, too, Doctor?" as she measured the instant coffee into her cup.

"Thank you, that's fine," he returned, and the rift was between them again.

# 8

Another week went by. Diana decided to tell Tim that he could find somebody else, and she would go back to California and take up her side-tracked plans for the future. Then word came that Dr. Eldred's condition was being built to the point where he could undergo surgery for what might be a malignancy. At present he was not considered ready for even exploratory surgery.

I can't leave now, Diana told herself, so she went from one day to another, until the end of her first month in Kaola City had drawn near.

When she arrived at the office that hot morning at the end of the month, Valerie met her at the side door. "The Hasties are here," she said. "They brought their baby, and she looks awfully sick to me."

Diana went down to the waiting room. The young husband, Georgie, was pacing the floor, and Maria sat with her first child cradled against her swelling abdomen.

"What happened, Maria?" Diana asked, laying her hand on the child's hot little face.

Jeanie had been fretful the day before, Maria told her, and while she and Georgie were at work, her mother had given Jeanie a half dose of the strong cathartic she herself used as a laxative.

"Then, last night, Jeanie woke up and screamed," Maria went on falteringly. "No matter what we did, she kept on screaming. Mama said it would cost more in the night, but we came as soon as we could today."

Diana shook her head slightly; she was rather frightened at the sight of the small, taut belly, hard and distended. "Did the laxative work yet?"

"No. Not really. Just—well, there was bleeding in the night. But she's better now!" Maria finished sharply. "Jeanie's a lot quieter!" Her big dark eyes begged Diana to say that the child was suddenly getting well.

Jeanie *was* quiet. Too quiet. She was, in fact, already in shock. Her skin was waxy, save for a feverish flush. She had evidently been vomiting, and the odor clung sourly, but otherwise she was scrupulously clean.

Diana turned to Val and said quietly, "Take her in and help Maria undress her, please. I'll be right there." And with a gentle word to the father, saying that she would make the examination

at once, she hurried back to slip into the thin white professional smock.

When she entered the examining room, Jeanie was undressed and lay there quietly limp. Diana's concern seemed reflected in Val's sober gaze across the examining table.

Very gently, Diana's fingers went over the taut abdomen, but the baby didn't cry, even though the slightest touch was sure to bring pain. Then Diana's sensitive touch found what she had feared to locate—the hard tumorlike mass, sausage-shaped, just below the navel.

"A blockage," she said, low. Then, to Maria, "Will you go get your husband, dear, so we can all talk together?" When the girl was gone, she said to Val, "A complete blockage, I think. And undoubtedly there's internal hemorrhaging."

"Oh, Lord!" Valerie whispered, and one part of Diana's mind noted that the nurse was a different person when practicing her profession. The other part of her mind was concerned with the young parents who had come to stand beside their baby. Georgie's face looked gray, his eyes shadowed with worries that seemed too heavy for his years. But he put an arm about Maria and listened quietly while Diana put her diagnosis into words they could both understand.

"Something has caused a blockage in your

baby's intestinal tract. If it isn't cleared away, she will keep getting worse. We've got to operate right away."

They looked appalled, then Georgie sputtered, "The money—I'll raise it some way! But it will take a little time. If Jeanie dies before—"

"We're not worrying about or waiting for money, Georgie. I just want your permission to operate at once."

"What caused it?" Maria choked out. "She's healthy! We took good care of her!"

"I know, dear," Diana assured her. "I can't say just what did cause it. Maybe a little tumor that suddenly grew larger. Or a malformation. Or maybe the laxative was too strong, perhaps bringing on muscle spasms. Whatever it is, we must correct it." She looked at Val. "We can't risk sending her all the way to General. Too long a trip. There's nothing closer except Clydon Memorial?"

"None closer. And Clydon doesn't count."

Diana shook her head. "They took one emergency. We can at least give them a chance to take another. Start Jeanie on saline, please, till we can get some whole blood. I'll be right back." She hurried into her office, looked up a number, and dialed it.

"Good morning!" came a bright greeting.

"Dr. Clydon, please. An emergency. Dr. Davis calling."

A brief silence, then the voice came back. "I'm sorry. Dr. Clydon is in surgery. Will you leave your number, please?"

"No! This is an emergency. I have a baby here with intestinal blockage—an ileocecal intussusception, I suspect. Immediate surgery is called for, and she cannot be carried any farther than to Clydon. I *must* fetch her to your hospital at once, so please—"

"I'm sorry!" the woman broke in, her bright tones now cool. "Our surgeries are all in use, and, as I said, Dr. Clydon himself is in surgery. So—"

Diana drew a long breath. "I have no time to argue about it now, but I want you to give this message to Dr. Clydon. By refusing to accept this grave emergency, he has laid himself open to legal action, and I intend to take it!" She slammed down the phone, then stood for a moment planning the next move.

A moment later she went back to the baby, whom Val had wheeled into the small surgery room. Val had the saline back on the rack and was painting one small foot with antiseptic. "You were right about the hemorrhaging," Val said. "Her veins have all but collapsed. A cutdown?" She looked at Diana.

Diana nodded, scrubbed as swiftly as she could, and slipped her hands into sterile gloves. Taking the tiny foot in her hand, she reached for the scalpel Val held in a sterile towel. "I sent those kids into the other room to fill out the consent form," Val said quietly.

"Good!" Diana said. From now on, the parents should not watch what was done for their baby.

Diana incised the skin deeply enough to show the main vein, small and pale-looking now. Clamping the skin back, she cut into the vein itself, opening it for insertion of the sterile polyethylene tubing Val had ready. Then the saline needle went in, and the first step had been taken. The liquids drained from the small child would now start to be replaced.

Val said anxiously, "Tim didn't leave any schedule—he didn't expect to make any calls after he got back from the long trip to the hospital. Something must have come up there to detain him. He'll probably call shortly. Oh, I hope he does!"

"We can't wait for anybody or anything," Diana replied shortly. "We've got to do the surgery right now—and right here. If we can find somebody on short notice to give the anesthetic, fine. If not, you'll have to manage it."

Valerie drew a long breath, then said, "Marcy Leeman was trained for anesthesia. She gives it to the dentist's patients. I know she can get off."

"Fine! Call her, will you please? And do a little praying, Val—we need help on this. And the sooner we get started, the better chance this baby has."

Val went out, and it wasn't more than five minutes before she came in with the redheaded Marcy Leeman. Diana had already donned her surgical gown and mask.

"What anesthetic, Doctor?" Marcy asked as she started to scrub.

"Have we propane, Val?" Diana asked, and when Val nodded, Diana went on, "We'll use that with a tube. It's quicker than ether, and time counts."

Things moved miraculously after that, or so it seemed to Diana, who knew how long it took the usual nursing staff to prepare for a surgery. Here the three women helped each other. The parents were still seated in the waiting room, the anesthesia was started, and Diana herself painted the small abdomen with the orange-hued surgical antiseptic while Valerie quickly set up her instrument tray.

By the time the sterile towels were draped around the surgical area, Marcy said, "She's

under, Doctor, and as ready as she'll ever be. If only—" Her voice sank as if in prayer. "If only it doesn't have to take too long!"

Diana prayed, too, as her eyes picked out the spot for the initial line of incision—and a long line it would be, to expose the abdominal contents.

Then they heard Tim's voice, shocked and astonished. "For Pete's sake!" he ejaculated. "What are you women up to?"

Glancing up, Valerie saw that his face was white with shock and something close to anger.

"Come in," Diana said sharply without looking up. "And get scrubbed, if you've nothing better to do."

"Okay! But what is it? What'll I need?"

"It's an emergency. A bowel impaction," Diana answered. "And a bad one."

"My God!" Tim breathed. "Well, get her ready while I scrub and get into a gown! I'm glad you've got things ready for me, Diana. And I'm glad you'll be here to help."

Diana lifted her head and stared at him above her white mask. Was he actually expecting her to hand over her own patient now? She had to fight down her sudden fury, because the baby lying there before her would need all the calm judgment and skill she could give her.

She held on to her composure, but when she spoke, her voice held the sharpness of a whiplash. "By all means, get scrubbed quickly, Doctor, for I truly need your assistance. Meanwhile, I can't waste any time!"

Only an instant longer did their gazes meet, both pairs of eyes cold and anger-filled. Then, tight-lipped, Tim went out to get scrubbed, stopping briefly to pick up a sterile surgery pack from the cupboard.

Diana drew a long breath and told herself that she was doing the only thing she could do. To back down would be admitting that she considered herself incompetent, and would be closing the door against any change while she was here. And presenting herself as a poor physician, a failure as a surgeon, would lower her esteem still more, not only before the eyes of Tim and Valerie but in her own mind as well.

All the same, she felt an unfamiliar shakiness as she said, "Scalpel, please!" and held out her hand to Val. But she didn't stop. After a moment's look at the small bloated abdomen, she took the first step. An instant later there was a long thin trail of red where the scalpel had cut; it had to be a long incision because the whole intestinal tract had to be inspected for rupture or gangrene.

"Good!" Val whispered, and when Diana

looked at her somewhat startled, Val gave a faint smile and a nod; then her gaze went back to her own work.

Diana cut through the layer of baby fat, and then the peritoneum, the membrane lining the abdominal cavity. Swiftly, with Val's help, she found the bleeding veins and arteries, and clamped or tied them off, stopping only to glance at Marcy now and then to get a report.

"She's holding it!" Marcy reported each time, and while this meant that the baby's condition had not improved, it also meant that she was growing no worse.

At last Diana said, "Retractors!" and reached to get them from Valerie's hands. Instead, she saw that another pair of hands held the retractors and was already applying them and stretching the wound wide enough to provide working room inside. Startled, Diana looked up at the tall figure, gowned and masked, who had come to stand opposite her.

Tim said, as he pulled the opening still wider, "I took a moment to start the baby's father on giving blood. His type was on an I.D. card he has. Good old type O that'll fit in with whatever type the baby has. So you can start her on whole blood as soon—" He broke off, staring, as the baby's abdomen was fully opened.

The telescoped parts of the intestines were plainly visible. A good four inches had collapsed into the adjoining area, possibly brought about by stomach spasms from the overstrong laxative, and the prolapse was worsened by a pluglike mass of intestinal waste. Not even blood could circulate through that hard mass.

"And look!" Diana breathed, her gloved finger pointing out the grayish patch just below the blockage. Gangrene! For an instant she stared at it in sick comprehension, but Marcy's voice jerked her up quickly.

"Pressure's dropping. Breathing's more shallow."

"More oxygen!" Diana said instantly, and for a brief moment they all watched the breathing bags.

Then Marcy said, "I'll try to hold it—but hurry!"

As if they were of one person, the four hands of Diana and Tim moved with precision and skill, skipping nothing in their haste. The block of waste above the telescoped parts was excised, then the collapsed parts were gently eased free. The whole wound was thoroughly cleaned, and the two severed ends were tightly mattress-stitched together.

After that came the long examination of the

rest of the tract—for even a baby has an interminable length—looking for tiny patches of gray or small breaks.

While this was being done, Valerie went to fetch the blood that the father had given, and once it started to flow into the child, the strain was lessened.

Diana felt her weariness drain away as she looked across at Tim. "We can close up now."

He nodded. "Good work, Diana!" he said as he removed the retractors. "A fine job well done!"

A bit of triumph flared in her, but it was doused almost at once, for Tim went on enthusiastically, "I was so right about you, girl! Your hands, small yet so strong, are made for handling babies!"

This was no time for an angry retort, so she bit her lips and went about the job of suturing. And when the last dressing had been put on, the anesthetic turned off, and she was pulling off her mask, ready to go to the waiting parents to say that all was well, she realized that she needed Tim's help after all.

"The baby must go to the hospital now—and soon. I'm not on the staff, so you'll have to attend to the admittance."

"We'll enter her as Eldred's patient," Tim returned quickly. "And I've already mentioned you

as his substitute, and your name will come up at the next staff meeting. You'll be accepted, I was assured of that. So you're enough on the staff to enter your own patient."

"Thanks, Tim. Then the next thing—oh, dear! I suppose the parents haven't enough money for an ambulance!"

"The county will pay for it," Valerie said quickly. "And Marcy is phoning about Jeanie's getting the bed that our Soroptimist Club supports over there. Marcy and I are both on the committee, but since she's the chairman, I asked her to phone. At least we know it's empty, so I'm sure the baby will get it."

"That's right!" Marcy announced as she entered the room. "You can send her any time, and they'll have things ready for her."

"Fine!" And now, Diana, you'd better go break the good news to the parents." Tim's tones were gentle.

Diana looked around as she took off her surgery cap, and she knew a sudden warmth. They had worked together under great stress and accomplished all that they had set out to do. The best-equipped hospital in the world could do no more than that. They had been a team. Even she and Val had worked as one. Suddenly Diana was ashamed of her anger toward Tim.

She said quickly, "Tim, you go with the baby. After all, you've got other patients at the hospital—"

"No, this is for you, Diana. The child is your patient, and," he added gravely, "it was your good work that saved her." He patted her hand briefly as he strode into his washroom to clean up.

Diana went into his office; Georgie was lying on the couch and Maria was sitting beside him. Their eyes were tense with questioning as they looked at her without speaking.

"The baby came through splendidly," Diana told them, "and she has a fine chance for recovery. However, she needs special care for a few days, so we're sending her to the hospital. Georgie, do you think you're able to drive my car over? I'll ride in the ambulance with the baby, but I'll need a ride back."

"Sure!" Georgie sat up. "If I feel weak, then Maria will drive. I was scared after I heard a nurse call the hospital. My old car isn't safe for long runs."

"Everything's fine, then. You couldn't stay with the baby, anyhow, so you can come back with me. And if there should be a change in the night—which I don't expect—I'll pick you up." She went on to tell them about the bed secured by the So-

roptimist Club. "So slip back and see the baby, if you like, while I get ready to go. But don't touch her or disturb her. She's still partially under the anesthetic."

Diana hurried to her office to slip off her surgical gown and get dressed again. She had just finished when she heard the siren wail to a stop in front of the office. And minutes later she was riding toward the hospital, sitting beside the tiny child who was not yet out of danger, but who had been given a chance to survive.

The ride was a smooth one because it was not an emergency case being rushed for help. Finally they arrived at the hospital and the child was quickly admitted. After seeing Jeanie settled in bed, and after writing out her orders while the young parents saw their baby for a few moments, Diana was ready to leave.

"I'll drive now," Diana said. "You take it easy, Georgie, at least for a day. Drink a lot of fluids and get all the rest you can tonight. Your baby's going to be all right, but you want to be able to go and see her, so get some sleep. You, too, Maria. After all, there's the other baby to think of."

"All right," Georgie said. "But if Jeanie gets sick in the night, like last night—"

"There's no reason why she should, Georgie.

But if the slightest change should occur, the hospital will phone me at once, and I promise to let you know right away."

Georgie nodded, then choked out, "We thank you with all our hearts, Doctor. Someday we'll pay you and—" He stopped and shook his head, as if he knew all too well that the "someday" when he would be solvent might never come.

# 9

The rest of that day was crammed with work. While Diana was at the hospital, Tim had handled all he could of her patients, along with his own, but many were still waiting. Caring for them kept both doctors busy well into the late afternoon.

Marcy had stayed, too, because there was no special need of her at the dental office that day. Diana was grateful that Tim assigned Val to her and kept Marcy to assist him. Val knew the patients and worked at her best, making things easier for Diana. What was more, Val kept bringing in good reports on little Jeanie, which she had gained by phone and already relayed to the parents.

When the last patient had gone and Diana could leave, she felt enormously tired.

Tim took one look at her and said, "Diana, my doctor friend from Melbourne is looking in on my patients at the hospital tonight. We often help each other out this way. Shall I have him take a

look at Jeanie? He'll check with you as soon as he's seen the baby, and if anything's gone wrong, he could take over till you get there."

She gave a sigh of relief, then nodded. "Fine—and thanks, Tim. I feel as if I'd had it today!"

She picked up her things and went out the side door to the small parking lot alongside the office. An unfamiliar car was there, a small gray compact. As Diana came near it, a pretty, dark-haired woman slid out of the car.

"Are you Dr. Davis?" she asked. "Dr. Diana Davis?"

"Yes, I am. It's after office hours, but if you need to see me—"

The woman smiled, a quick smile that brought dimples to her tanned cheeks. "I want to see you very much, but not professionally. You see, I'm a nurse from Melissa Clydon Hospital," she explained. "I'm the one who answered your call, and—oh, I've worried about the baby all day."

Diana stared at her. The voice on the phone had sounded cool and indifferent about the child who needed help. But now it was warm and concerned.

"The baby's getting along splendidly," Diana replied, her tone slightly puzzled. But when she realized that the woman's interest was unmistakably real, she explained, "We operated in

the office, then sent her to the nearest hospital—that is, to the next-nearest hospital after Clydon Memorial refused."

"It was awful, having to do it that way, and—" The woman was silent for a moment, then she spoke again, more slowly. "I know what I sounded like, Dr. Davis. But I have to be like that to hold my job. And with my husband away—he went to Vietnam and is a POW now—" Her voice broke, then she recovered and went on in stronger but bitter tones, "Sometimes ethics get all mixed up. Especially medical ethics. I mean—well, they're all set out on the straight and narrow, then somebody bends them a little—or a lot—and everything runs off the track."

Diana looked at her questioningly. After a moment the woman gave a little laugh. "Being part of the family, I think I've got the right to try and put decent ethics back on the track. You see, I'm Lex Clydon's second cousin," she explained tightly. "I'm Lissy Streeter—Lissy's short for Melissa. My mother married a doctor—she was a Clydon—and Dad was a country doctor, I guess you'd call it. A fine one, too. I grew up believing the way Dad did—that the patient came first, even if he had no money to pay the doctor. After I married, my husband made me see how far off Lex Clydon was, and we planned to fight him so

Mama would get her share of the money—for in some way Lex had gotten control of everything. But Don enlisted . . . and was taken prisoner, so everything stopped. And I was crazy enough to take the job Lex offered, even though he's the sort of doctor I hate. . . . But I'm saving the money I earn so we can start a home if—when Don comes back." Her voice trailed off and her eyes were tragic.

"I'm sorry," Diana said. Then, wondering why Lissy had come, she went on slowly, "I can understand why your voice sounded as it did, but—"

"You don't understand why I'm here?" Lissy finished. "Well, I felt that I had to come. On the phone, you threatened to fight Lex. But you can't. You mustn't even try. Nobody can even cross him a little without paying a lot for it. In some way he'll even get even with me—and my husband, if he comes back—and I think Lex gave me this job so I'd think he was no longer angry. So don't try to fight Lex."

"I've got to," Diana said quietly. "It's too unfair the way it is. And evidently it's not the way the first Melissa wanted it to be."

"I know, but you see I *had* to warn you, Dr. Davis! I would never have told Lex what you threatened to do, but the girl at the switchboard

listened in to our talk and then ran in and told Lex right away."

"Perhaps it's just as well. He had to know sooner or later."

"But you don't understand, Doctor! Lex never waits for other people to make the first move. He acts first, and he always makes the person who tried to do something very sorry. He'll do something to hurt you, Dr. Davis. He'll plan it, and he's got a lot of folks who do whatever he tells them to do. Even though you're a woman, he'll do something to hurt you—hurt you bad."

There was a moment's silence, then Tim spoke from beside them. "Hi, Lissy! Anything wrong?"

"It's Lex. And what Dr. Davis said over the phone today."

Tim looked at Diana questioningly.

"As I recall it," Diana said with a small smile, "I said he was acting unethically to refuse admittance to an emergency patient, and I also said I was going to do something about it!"

She expected Tim to smile and say he would be glad to join the battle, but he merely looked distressed. After a moment's silence he turned to Lissy. "Thanks for warning us, Lissy," he said, then smiled ruefully. "Maybe, since it was a woman who threatened him, he won't think it's worthwhile to fight."

"You ought to know Lex better than that!" Lissy answered tiredly. She turned back to her car, and Tim opened the door for her. She smiled wanly at Diana. "Well, whatever—please think it over, won't you? And good luck to whatever you decide." Then she drove off, leaving Tim and Diana standing there in a silence that increased by the moment.

Tim finally broke it by saying, "Well, there's not much we can do right now except to be watchful and on our guard."

Diana, filled with a sudden resentment against the way both Lissy and Tim had reacted, flared out, "Watchful? What do you mean we must be watchful? And on our guard? This Lex Clydon is the one who should be on guard! Running a hospital the way he is—a hospital that was meant to serve the community! Dr. Clydon *must* be reported and the situation there made right. You can't back down, Tim Henry! Even if you do, I won't! I meant exactly what I said."

Tim's face went tight. "Big tough words don't mean much, Diana, not against a man like Clydon. Maybe I should have made it clear to you sooner. Clydon owns almost everything in Kaola City and around it. He owns the local newspaper. He controls the development company that built most of the town. We lease our office from that

company, and it's close to the time to sign a new lease. If he tells them to cancel it, they'll have to do it—we're under a series of options—and if that happens, we won't be able to get another office in this locality. It would mean starting all over again, just where I don't know, and building up a new practice. So—"

Diana turned away slowly and walked toward her car. Tim didn't want a fight with Clydon, and she had probably started one. The worst of it was, if any harm came out of it, it would not affect her. It would all be taken out on Tim. And on Dr. Eldred, who was too old and feeble to start all over again.

She got into her car, but instead of reaching for the ignition, she slumped back into the seat, too heartsick to do anything. Minutes passed by, and she didn't even hear the approaching footsteps until somebody came up to the car and leaned through the open window.

"Diana!" It was Tim's voice, with no worry or anger in it. "Look, I just got a phone call from Pete Linstrom, my medical friend. He says he just checked on little Jeanie, and she's okay. He's going to be on special call all night, and he'll be looking in on her again later this evening. So no cause for worry there."

"It's wonderful the way it's worked out. And—thanks, Tim."

"And if anything should go wrong, I'll drive you over there myself. So—" he stuck his head farther through the window—"how about you and me going to the Blastoff for dinner? I'll bet you didn't have any lunch, and neither did I!"

The world was spinning at its old speed again. Diana started the motor. "Just give me a few minutes to get into fresh clothes. I can even meet you at the inn."

"Absolutely not! I'll get gussied up myself, leave word with the answering service where we'll be, and then I'll pick you up at your place."

She had another thought, maybe because Val had been so helpful today, or maybe to be sure that Tim really wanted her company. "Tim, what about Valerie? She had no lunch, either."

He looked at her quizzically, then chuckled. "Val's already halfway through her evening meal, I'll bet! She and Marcy left a few minutes after you did."

Diana's tiredness seemed to vanish. "Well, I'll be on my way!" she said happily. "And I guarantee to be ready when you get there!"

In a matter of minutes she had arrived at the motel, showered, brushed her blonde hair into shape, and slipped into a sleeveless yellow-

flowered dress that went well with the soft tan she had already acquired. Except for a touch of pale lipstick, she didn't bother with make-up, and was ready when she heard Tim's knock on the screen door.

Tim stood there looking very handsome, very eager, like a young boy on his first date.

"Hey, you look grand!" he exclaimed. "Nobody would know how much hard work you've done today! But let's forget about work, shall we?"

Diana nodded as Tim locked the door, handed her the key, then took her hand as they walked out to his car.

# 10

That was the start of a wonderful evening. There was a sprinkle of rain, followed by a few bluish shafts of sudden lightning, but the heart of the storm was some miles away, and the misty spurts of rain temporarily lessened the heat of the evening. When they reached the Blastoff and went inside, they found a most welcome coolness, even with the restaurant as crowded as it was.

"I was smart for once, and phoned in to reserve a table," Tim boasted with a grin. "I don't know where they'll tuck us away, but at least we won't have to sit around waiting."

They were shown to a table for two in a corner behind a huge palmetto planter. And as soon as they were seated, a waiter appeared from the cocktail lounge.

"Don't you think we deserve at least one?" Tim asked. "After all, Diana, you probably won't have to rush to the hospital during the next hour or two, I'm sure. I called there just before I left, and got the word that little Jeanie was still doing fine.

I even called Georgie and Maria and told them so they can get some sleep."

"Thanks, Tim. You're pretty wonderful!" She reached out and patted his hand, then found her own hand in his clasp as he gave their order to the waiter.

Afterward Diana could recall few details of that evening. Maybe it was because her startlingly busy day—and her memory of that day's work well done—had cast a glow about her thoughts. Or maybe it was because she could forget most of the bad happenings of that day and remember only that a baby had lived, and that she and Tim were on friendly terms again.

Maybe the single drink helped, too, but whatever it was, the difficult day ended in a beautiful evening for her and, judging from his talk and actions, for Tim as well.

Everything went smoothly. The music was sweet and not too loud. The food was delicious. Tim was so very companionable, and even the waiter helped by doing nothing to hurry their dinner along.

But finally the evening did end, and they started toward the place Diana now called home. "It was such a wonderful evening, Tim," she said. "And it was sweet of you to forget, for a while,

that I may have started trouble with Dr. Clydon."

"Well, we can't meet that ahead of time, even if it does come. And we can fight him one way or another. He—oh, let's forget it until we see what happens!" He flung an arm about her and drew her closer until her head was on his shoulder. Happily, there was little traffic on the road he had chosen, so he could drive more slowly.

"It's such a beautiful night, Tim," Diana murmured. "The rain helped, for it's so cool and clean now. And the moon—" She looked up at the big disc in the sky. "It's so different. Our California moon is gold, but here—well, it's silver, and so bright it seems as if the moonlight is just piled in heaps on the ground . . . like snow you could pick up in your hands. It's so fragile, so very beautiful."

He chuckled. "So you're beginning to discover nice things about Florida!" he said teasingly. "Most Californians don't." He paused for a moment. "There's some not-so-nice things about the summers, though. The heat, and too many thunder and lightning showers, which can be pretty gruesome as the summer wears on. And there are hurricanes now and then, to say nothing of the mosquitoes and other insects that keep folks away

from Florida in the summertime. But, all around, it's a pretty fine place, and I'm glad you're starting to like it."

She nodded, and they rode the rest of the way in silence, finally coming to a stop before her motel cabin.

"Thanks again, Tim, for a wonderful evening," she repeated. "It's taken all the strain away from the day."

"Don't let it come back, Diana," he returned. Then, drawing her close in his arms, he kissed her long and lingeringly. And the truth came to her at that moment.

She was in love with Dr. Tim Henry! And it was not the sort of love she had known a time or two before, when some man had made her think she was in love with him and then driven the feeling from her by doing something to make her upset.

This was different. Nothing could ever change this feeling she now had for Tim. And the realization brought a warm glow to her, and a chilling fear.

No matter what Tim did, she herself could never change. He might fall deeply in love with somebody else—maybe even with Valerie—but Diana would never stop caring.

"Oh, Tim!" she whispered when he took his

lips away from hers. "Oh, why—" But she couldn't even finish whatever she was about to ask him.

Still in her daze of happy excitement, mingled with the sadness of what might lie ahead, she sat there quietly as Tim got out and came around to open her door. He put an arm around her as they walked to her cabin; then he took her key, unlocked the door, and went inside to turn on the light and look around. Satisfied, he took Diana in his arms again and kissed her before he went back to his car.

Diana remained at the open screen door to watch him climb into his car and drive off.

"What a wonderful day!" she whispered happily. "What—" She broke off suddenly, staring into the shadows on the porch. For a voice had called to her in low but urgent tones.

"Who is it?" Diana demanded sharply.

A figure emerged from the shadows of a large bush alongside the porch. "It's Carolyn! I'm sorry I was hiding, but—oh, nobody must know I came! And I had to see you!"

Startled, Diana burst out, "Carolyn! It's late for you to be out alone. But come in for a moment."

Carolyn came inside, stood there a moment, then cried, "I know you'll hate me when you find out that I'm my father's daughter! Almost every

body hates him. Sometimes I almost do! Now I *really* do, because—well, I know how he'll hurt you!"

Diana stared at the girl, puzzled, almost frightened. Then she saw the terror on Carolyn's face and *was* frightened as she went over and put an arm around her shoulder. "Take it easy, honey! Nobody's going to hurt me."

"Daddy is!" the girl choked out. "I know he is! Oh, you don't know him, and—" She stopped, then went on in dull tones, "I didn't tell you my full name before because I thought you'd hate me if you found out. Now you've found out. I'm Carolyn Clydon. My father is Dr. Alexander Clydon. Oh, why did you make him so angry today?"

"I had to!" Diana exclaimed, and the happiness of having been with Tim was immediately gone. She was silent for a moment, then said as calmly as she could, "Don't worry, dear. I did get pretty angry and say things over the phone today, but I was really upset. There was a very sick baby in our office, so sick that she needed an operation right away. And I knew she could never wait or endure the trip to the nearest hospital. I had to try for help any way I could."

"I understand," Carolyn replied. "And I know that Daddy is all wrong about the way he runs the hospital. But I had to come and warn you. I heard

the switchboard girl tell him what you said, and he was furious. And he still is. I can tell it—the way he goes around without talking to anybody while he makes his awful plans!" Her voice broke.

"He'll probably get over this spell," Diana said as soothingly as she could, trying to keep her voice calm in order to quiet the girl's fears. "After all, I did lose my temper because I was so scared, and I did speak pretty plainly to him, but when he thinks it over, he'll understand. Any doctor would. After all, a baby's life was at stake."

Carolyn shook her dark head. "You don't know my father," she said. "He can't take any criticism. That's why Mama left him. And then he managed to get a smart lawyer, so he has custody of me most of the time, and Mama is alone. But with you—he'll never forget that you threatened him."

"But this was a medical life-and-death case! And your father is a doctor, Carolyn!"

"He's a doctor, but not the sort that puts his profession first. The main thing is, he just can't stand anybody not agreeing with him! Or anybody criticizing him. He has to get even no matter who's involved. And he'll get even with you! Oh, I know he'll do something *awful* to make you pay for what you said!" Her voice broke again and tears fell down her tanned cheeks.

"Don't worry, dear!" It was all Diana could

think of to say. "*Please.* . . ." Carolyn's shoulders heaved, and after a moment Diana went on: "It's all turned out right so far. We operated right there in the office, then sent little Jeanie to another hospital, and she's doing fine. And after all, what harm could Dr. Clydon do to me?" Her words sounded surer than she felt, but she wanted to calm the girl down. "Can't you see that, dear?"

But Carolyn did not see it. "He's going to put you and the other doctors out of the office you're renting," she said, still tearful. "I heard him talking on his private phone. What's more, he'll make sure you can't get any other office anywhere close by. He—he can do that, because he doesn't care how much he spends as long as he gets even."

"Oh!" Diana breathed, remembering all that Lissy Streeter and Tim had said. Both Lissy and Carolyn, who knew the older doctor so well, feared him so much. She kept her arm about Carolyn's shoulder, but again she felt the shakiness inside her, the fear that Tim had taken away while they were together earlier.

Carolyn went on bitterly, "You'll hate me now because I'm a Clydon. You'll hate me even more when Daddy gets into what he's planning to do. Well, I don't like *being* a Clydon. I know we're no better than anybody else, or even as good as

most folks. All the same, Daddy keeps me away from practically everyone because he thinks I'm better than they are and he doesn't want me to mix with them. And it's not because he cares so much about me. I know that. It's just that he wants me to be exclusive because I'm a Clydon. That's why I have to sneak out at night. I *have* to, because if I didn't I'd flip my lid!"

"It's wrong and unsafe for you to ride out alone at night, dear," Diana said, "and I do want you to be careful. But when it comes to our friendship, there's nothing your father can do that will ever change it. Please remember that, but don't take any risks."

Her voice was shaky, not only because of Carolyn and her bitter talk but because the dismay and fright that she had felt when Lissy Streeter spoke to her was back in full force.

Yes, the realization of what she had done was all-consuming. By threatening Dr. Clydon, she very well might have spoiled Dr. Eldred's future chance to continue the work he loved. And Tim Henry—oh, dear Lord, what had she done to Tim!

But she fought back her apprehension and patted Carolyn's shoulder. "Don't worry, dear. It'll come out all right, I'm sure. We'll think of

something, or your father will surely realize how much was at stake to upset me. After all, as I said, he is a doctor—"

Carolyn shook her head impatiently and pulled away from Diana. "I'll go now, before somebody misses me and Daddy puts out a search party! Usually everybody's asleep when I leave, but tonight—well, he's so upset that he hadn't gone to bed when I left. Diana, please don't hate me."

"Of course not, dear! And I feel sure that things will work out all right."

"If I hear anything else—any plan—I'll let you know."

"Oh, no!" Diana exclaimed. "You can't!" For it didn't seem right for the girl to be conspiring against her own father. But there was no chance to say anything more, for Carolyn had slipped through the door, and an instant later Diana heard the soft plop of a horse's hooves moving into the darkness. She waited till the sound died out, then closed her apartment door, locked it, and leaned against it.

"What have I done?" she choked out huskily. "What have I done to Tim and Dr. Eldred? And yet," she added in a whisper, "how could I have done anything else?"

# 11

The next week was filled with tension for all of them and, crazily, with a wild sort of happiness for Diana. The tension came from worry and waiting, wondering what Dr. Clydon would do. And the mixed feelings increased each day when he did nothing. At least nothing that came to their attention.

The happiness came from other things. Dr. Eldred had gone through surgery, and no malignancy was found. Another reason for Diana's happiness came from Tim's change of attitude. Tim was protective and understanding, so much so that Valerie, watching him, either was tight-lipped or was slipping away on this or that errand, to return with eyes that showed traces of recent tears. Diana actually felt sorry for the girl, but if she showed any concern, Val became withdrawn and almost sullen.

But it was easy to forget Valerie when Tim was around. Diana knew he was as worried as she about Dr. Clydon's next move, but he never men-

tioned the problem unless she brought it up. And when the next weekend rolled around, Tim asked her for another date.

"This time we won't be on call from the hospital, as we were last week," he pointed out. "So why don't we drive up the beach a way and have our dinner, then just drift around and enjoy the breeze?" She agreed, not caring where they went as long as she was with him.

So, on Saturday evening, they followed the coast and found a small seafood cafe that was quiet and homelike, and where the food was prepared by an elderly couple who smiled when they brought out the wonderful-smelling dishes. And once they had served Diana and Tim, they left them alone, completely alone, for their booth was in a corner and shut off by an Oriental screen.

After their meal they walked along the beach hand in hand, and when they stopped to rest for a while, Tim threw his sweater over Diana's shoulders and held it there with his arm. After a short silence, he said, "Diana, I want to apologize for the way I've acted since you came here—treating you like a weak female instead of the fine doctor you are."

"I don't blame you too much, Tim, because you had some reason for feeling that way. I've

been pretty feisty, as if it mattered what work I did, what patients I cared for. After all, I am in general practice!"

Tim shook his head. "I've faced it, Diana. I'm afraid I've been a bit jealous of you, professionally. Stubborn, too. But in spite of my shortcomings," he went on slowly, "I—I think I'm falling in love with you, dear." He turned her face to his and kissed her very gently, yet with enough fire to kindle a myriad little flames in her.

When the kiss ended, she buried her face on his shoulder a moment, then lifted it again. "Tim, I feel—I feel as you do. And that makes me so sorry and so ashamed of what I've done. About Dr. Clydon, I mean. But I was so angry that I could have torn down the whole Clydon Memorial Hospital brick by brick. I've got a terrible temper, Tim. I don't flare up often, but when I do I—I can't always control my anger." The tears came then, crazily, as if she were still a child.

Tim only chuckled and wiped away the tears rolling down her cheek. "I'll teach you how to control that temper. Honey, you're a born fighter, the good kind of fighter this old world needs. You were fighting for what is right, and in this case I think you've started something that should have been started long ago. And I'm right with you in the fight. So—no more tears, Doctor!"

And Diana echoed happily, "No more tears, Doctor!"

That was the beginning of a wonderful week. It was a busy week, with no more talk of falling in love, but the thought of it was between them all the time. And their understanding of each other deepened. They worked together and went out together most evenings, not for long because one or the other was on call for emergencies, but even a short time gave them a chance to relax and enjoy themselves.

It was a dreamlike time. Someday, Diana told herself, we'll begin our plans for the future, but now everything is perfect. And certainly Tim's love was growing; if he wasn't sure of his feelings by now, he wouldn't want to be with her so much. Nor would he treat her so gently in the office.

Valerie must certainly have guessed the new relationship between Diana and Tim, for she went about her work increasingly stormy-eyed. Tim, apparently, didn't notice. Which made Diana more convinced than ever that Tim had never really been serious about the pretty nurse.

When Keith Mizner dropped by on the weekend, he and Val joined Tim and Diana for dinner. And Diana had no worries. Val hardly noticed Tim, giving practically all her attention to

Keith. And during the following week she didn't seem so upset about Tim and Diana. So things went along smoothly, even if there was still some apprehension about Dr. Clydon's plans. But when the week ended without any word from Clydon Memorial Hospital, they all felt relieved.

"Lex must have come to his senses," Tim remarked that night as they ate together.

Diana nodded. "He probably thought things over and realized how unethical it would be for him to stir up trouble now. Maybe he was even ashamed to recall how he responded to a plea for help. I mean, he had fixed it beforehand that certain types of patients would not be admitted, so he just stayed quiet. Well, I can get along without an apology, I guess!" She laughed.

"It would be too much, his apologizing to anybody!" Tim grinned. "So I guess we're in the clear."

They started the next week happily enough. Late Monday morning they received a special-delivery letter from Dr. Eldred. He was recovering nicely and would be home before another month rolled by. He would not be able to work hard for a while; in fact, he might never be able to take up an active practice again, but he would be there to help out in emergencies and to do follow-ups. At

any rate, he was leaving the actual surgery work up to Tim and Diana, so Diana would have to stay on.

"Bless his heart, he couldn't make me leave now!" Diana laughed. "Oh, hasn't everything turned out wonderfully, Tim?" They were sitting in her office, close together.

He looked at her, then nodded. "Wonderfully!" he echoed huskily. Just then the phone rang in the waiting room. Valerie answered it almost at once, and Tim gave Diana a crooked smile.

"We bragged too soon," he said. "From the tone of Val's voice, I gather that one of us, or maybe both of us, is going to be called on some difficult case."

Val appeared in the doorway. "It's for you, Doctor!" Her gaze went to Diana, and she looked somewhat resentful. "It seems to be a very private call."

Diana sighed. "Well, it's been too good to be true." She picked up the desk telephone and said with a smile, "This is Dr. Davis. May I help you?"

"You may, indeed!" came a smooth-toned male voice, one that was faintly familiar. Then, a little more crisply, "Dr. Clydon speaking. We met briefly on the plane, after you delivered the twin births."

"Yes," she returned as he paused. "I remember

you, Dr. Clydon." She gave Tim a slight smile, then the other doctor began speaking again, in precise tones that attempted to be cordial but didn't quite make it.

"Dr. Davis, I think you and I should discuss a few topics. This is a rather hurried request, but will you have lunch with me now?" Then, without waiting for her answer, he went on, "I'll send somebody to pick you up in, say, about fifteen minutes, if that's convenient."

Diana drew a quick breath, ready to tell him that she had no wish to meet him again, ever. Then she remembered that she was the one who had stirred up the trouble between them, the trouble that threatened not only herself but Tim and Dr. Eldred.

"Please give me a moment to look over my appointment book," she said as casually as she could. Then, covering the mouthpiece with her hand, she whispered to Tim, "Of all things—it's Dr. Clydon inviting me to have lunch with him!"

"Good Lord, no!" Tim rasped. "He *is* plotting something if he's going this far! Don't you do it, Diana! It's just his slick way of getting even for your telling him off that day! You can't, Diana—you just can't go!"

"I've got to, Tim," she returned shortly, a bit irked by his taking over her decision and telling

her what to do. "This could be his way of apologizing, and believe me, I'm ready to patch things up after being under such a strain these past few weeks!" Then, speaking into the phone again, "I'll be glad to accept your invitation, Dr. Clydon, if I can be sure of getting back to my office by two o'clock."

"Fine! I want to take some time to show you our hospital, too."

"That will be interesting, Dr. Clydon. I understand it's quite modern. I hope that someday you will enlarge it enough to take in a wider scope of patients!" With that she hung up.

Silence hung over the room for a long moment while Tim and Valerie stood there staring at her. Then Tim burst out, "What the devil ails you, Diana? First you bend far enough to accept his invitation for lunch, and then you insult him! Do you think it's going to tame him down any?"

Diana just shrugged, feeling a bit sick inside as she recalled what Carolyn had said about her father. He just couldn't stand anybody's criticizing him . . . he had to get even no matter who the person was. And that meant he would get even with Tim, too.

She gathered up her purse and went to put on fresh make-up. She felt angry, but at whom she didn't know. Tim? Dr. Clydon?

She was just coming out of the washroom when Val came up to her.

"He's in our parking lot already," she announced with a shrug. "Better not delay. He's the sort of man who wants his women ready and eager to have his company."

Diana wanted to say a lot of things to Valerie, but she just nodded and went out the side door, glad yet oddly hurt that Tim was not somewhere nearby. He could at least have said a casual goodbye to show that he wasn't really disturbed.

She couldn't have missed the Clydon car had she wanted to, for it stood in the parking lot shining and overpowering, making the cars belonging to Tim, Valerie, and Diana look like slightly battered toys.

A smartly dressed chauffeur was opening the car door to let Dr. Clydon step out and help Diana in.

As they rode smoothly away, Diana happened to glance toward a window that overlooked the parking lot. She saw Tim staring moodily in her direction. But when Valerie's white cap appeared beside him, he turned to her, and Diana wished that she had never looked their way.

# 12

Dr. Clydon finally spoke, and Diana had to admit that he had an unexpected charm, at least while he was in this mood. She said slowly, "My coming seemed the only fair thing to do. And it gives me a chance to discuss things . . . I hope."

His smile remained, and his voice was smooth and gentle. "Of course we'll discuss things, but not till after lunch. Then, as I said, I would also like to show you the hospital."

"Thank you. I've heard a lot about it, and I'd like to see it, but I must get back to my office in time for my afternoon patients."

"Of course," he replied.

Diana could think of nothing more to say, at least nothing that would fit the occasion. After all, he was taking her out to lunch, and even if she had a lot of things all bottled up inside her, this was not the right time to say them. Especially when this meeting might have been arranged to give him a chance to admit that he had been wrong.

Or was that possible? After all, his anger over the phone had been real, and he didn't seem like a man about to beg somebody's pardon. He looked like a man sure of himself and confident that he commanded the situation and had it well in hand.

So Diana felt her way warily, alert for an opening that would reveal what his intentions were. But he was no more than a good and experienced host during the meal, which they had at the prosperous and exclusive country club.

The luncheon was served at a table on a shaded verandah overlooking the gardens and the far-off golf links.

After going over the luncheon menu with her, Lex Clydon ordered an extraordinary seafood salad, hot rolls, fresh strawberries and cake, and iced tea.

Diana was certain he would start the discussion when they were through, but he didn't. He merely smiled and said, "And now we'll see the hospital." In a few short minutes they were back in the limousine and driving away.

They talked little, but when they entered the ornate gates that were swung open for them and then started toward the main hospital building, Diana gave a little gasp. "It's even more beautiful than it seemed from the road below! These gardens—"

They were wonderful, all of them. Palms and magnolia trees were set amid wide swards of grass, grass that was almost violently green even now when the heat was hard on many growing things. There were arbors, too, some surrounded by clumps of ferns higher than any Diana had seen before. A lake shimmered at the foot of the slope. And, to Diana's delight, a number of peacocks and bright-feathered pheasants strutted around importantly.

Then they rounded a turn and came close to the hospital, and again Diana caught her breath. What she had glimpsed from the road below, the day Tim had driven her to Kaola City, was only a distant view, it seemed. Now each detail stood out clearly.

For the hospital, too, was outstandingly beautiful to the eye. Not plain and capable-looking, as most hospitals were, but ornate, like the grounds that surrounded it. Small balconies were outside each pair of windows, and each balcony had chairs and were fitted with bright canopies to keep out the sun and the rain.

"It's a beautiful building," Diana observed, but the beauty abruptly faded for her when she recalled the people who were ill and could not get admitted here.

Lex Clydon gave her a quick glance, a small

frown, then said, "Well, here we are!" as the car drew up to the main entrance. He got out and came around to open the door for her, and they went into a huge lobby that had an office at one end.

"If you'll rest here a moment, I'll go check with my secretary to see if any calls came in." And after her nod, he strode across the lobby and went into the office.

"Well, hi!" came another voice, a familiar one, and Diana glanced around and saw Carolyn Clydon standing there, her eyes wide with wonder. "How come you're here?" she asked. "Did my father—"

"He invited me, Carolyn. I don't know just why, but I hope it means—"

"Don't hope!" the girl broke in almost rudely. "He never changes anything unless it's to his advantage. You be careful—please! I couldn't bear it if—" She stopped, then turned and walked away, looking as if she had never seen Diana sitting there. Diana stared after her, puzzled, until she heard Dr. Clydon's voice close by, sounding annoyed.

"Carolyn!" he called. "Come back, please! I want you to meet a friend I've brought here."

The girl stopped, then turned slowly, her eyes

filled with alarm as she looked at Diana. And the look in her eyes remained as she followed her father over to Diana's chair.

"Dr. Davis, this is my daughter, Carolyn. Carolyn, this is Dr. Davis, a newcomer to Kaola City. I'm going to show her our hospital, and I'd like you to come with us."

Carolyn nodded. "I'm glad to meet you, Dr. Davis. I—I heard about you coming to Kaola, and —" She stopped, her voice rising on a note of excitement.

Diana held out her hand and pressed Carolyn's firmly. "I'm very glad to know you, Carolyn."

Dr. Clydon gave his tight smile. "You seem to have a great attraction, Dr. Davis! Usually my daughter turns something close to a cold shoulder on any guest who arrives here." Then, with an edge to his voice, "She likes horses better than she likes people. As a result, that cabinet over there" —he pointed to a large mahogany cabinet across the lobby whose glass doors showed shelves adorned with cups and medals—"is full!"

Carolyn's cheeks flushed. "At least," she said with a trace of bitterness, "horses don't make nervous wrecks of themselves, or get scared when thy start to get old and have to have themselves made over!"

"Carolyn!" her father remonstrated in a stern tone. Then he went on smoothly, "Well, let's get started on our tour."

They left the lobby, Dr. Clydon walking beside Diana and Carolyn trailing behind, and took an elevator to the top floor.

This was no ordinary hospital, Diana learned. The wide halls were so thickly carpeted that footsteps made no sound, and they were lighted by glass doors at the end of the corridor. Even a cart that an orderly was pushing made its way in utter silence, in contrast to the usual hospital sound of clanking carts. Crystal chandeliers hung down from the ceiling for night-lights.

"We'll look at this suite," Dr. Clydon said as he stopped before a door. "Mrs. Akron, from Philadelphia, is down in the baths, but she gave me permission to look in." He opened the door and stood aside for Diana and Carolyn to enter.

"Oh!" Diana breathed, looking about. For never, in hospital or hotel, had she glimpsed anything like this. The room was huge for a hospital room, and the gold shag wall-to-wall carpet was thick and soft. Instead of a regular hospital bed, there was a dainty four-poster—a single bed—with a canopy of soft yellow and white drapes. The dressing table and chest of drawers were of light maple, which blended in beautifully. The

two comfortable-looking chairs were also of maple and were upholstered in yellow. Even the bathroom, glimpsed through a half-opened door, followed the same color scheme.

"Each suite is done in a different color scheme," Dr. Clydon explained. "There are some repeats, of course, but usually the type of furniture is different. The idea is to get away from the regular hospital look of whitewashed walls and linoleum floors. Naturally," he went on hastily, "the rooms we use for post-surgery are a bit closer to the standard hospital type. Sterile, of course. And nobody stays in that section very long."

While Diana was still trying to take everything in, and to convince herself that it was not up to her to offer any criticism, somebody knocked discreetly on the door. Dr. Clydon opened it, and a low-toned conversation followed. Then the doctor turned and said, "You two look around some more while I make a quick call on a patient on this floor."

He started off, then turned back to Carolyn. "If I'm not back when you're through here, make sure that Dr. Davis sees our upstairs kitchen and the reading room."

Carolyn nodded, and when he left, she said to Diana, "I'm so glad you acted as if you didn't know me! You see—well, he doesn't really care

about me, but if he knew I was making friends outside, or even going off the grounds alone, he'd lock me in." Her tone was bitter.

"But it is a bit dangerous, dear. I mean riding out alone at night and going over country where there's no real road or bridle path."

"I'm not afraid. Anyway, I think the night groom knows I take my horse out, although he pretends not to hear me. If he didn't ignore me, he'd just naturally have to talk to Dad, and probably lose his sleep keeping watch. But if I didn't come back, he'd be looking for me, I guess." She shrugged, as if it didn't matter whether he searched for her or not.

There was nothing Diana could say.

After a brief silence, Carolyn went on, "Let's go out on the balcony for a minute. It's really lovely out there."

The balcony was actually a rather small porch, furnished with a comfortable-looking lounging chair, a round metal table, and two matching chairs. Large pots of ferns stood in one corner for decoration, but when Diana lifted her gaze to look beyond, her breath caught, and she knew there was no need for special decorations on the porch.

For the view was beautiful. The green lawns and the many clumps of flowers below, the lake

beyond, and the wide river that flowed a short distance away from the landscaped grounds formed a picture of beauty. Even the heat that steamed in through the canopy could not affect the view.

"Let's get in where it's cooler," Carolyn suggested, and Diana nodded and followed her back into the room.

"You were right," Diana said gently. "It is very beautiful out there. And inside, too. You're surrounded by beauty, Carolyn, and you should be happier than you are, dear."

Carolyn didn't answer immediately. After a moment she said, without looking at Diana, "Let me show you the rest of it now, or Daddy will be plenty sore!"

She led Diana down the hall to the kitchen with its stainless-steel cookware and shining stove.

"This is just used for extra snacks, or for heating milk for those who can't fall asleep. The real meals are prepared in the kitchen below. After all, folks who pay a fortune to stay a few days have to be pampered!"

Then they went to the reading room, an area of comfortable chairs, good lighting, piles of magazines, and numerous bookcases.

They skipped the second floor because it was a replica of the one they had just seen. Then, down-

stairs again, Carolyn took Diana through the treatment rooms, the steam baths, the large main kitchen, the oversized dining room with its sparkling candelabra.

Suddenly Diana felt ill. The overwhelming elegance of the hospital made her think of the truly sick patients who couldn't get admitted here, even though their lives were at stake. She had to get away immediately.

"Carolyn, I've got to go now," she said huskily. "I have my own work to do. Will you tell your father—"

"Too late," Carolyn interrupted. "He's here right now. And be careful what you say, Diana. If you don't—"

She broke off, and Diana, looking up, saw that Dr. Clydon was standing before her, smiling. For a moment she felt trapped, and a strange sort of panic filled her.

But it lasted only for a moment, because she was not one to give in to fear. She lifted her head and looked at Dr. Clydon coolly, and when she spoke, her voice was calm.

"Thank you, Doctor, for a splendid lunch and a chance to see your facilities. But now I must leave."

"You'll be back in time for your patients," he

said. "Right now the limousine is not here, but it will be back in a matter of minutes. So let's sit down for a moment, please. Because I've something very important to say."

## 13

Diana looked at Lex Clydon for a moment. Then she said, with a calmness that surprised her because of the sudden turmoil inside her, "If your car is needed somewhere else, I'll call the office and have somebody come for me."

"No need. And no real delay, Dr. Davis." Then, putting his arm about Carolyn and leading Diana to a chair behind a group of tubbed palmettos, he said, laughingly, "My daughter must have been talking! You see, she doesn't like this place any more . . . maybe because she has to spend the hot summer here."

Carolyn shrugged. "What's here for me?" she demanded. "I could have been up north where it's cooler—with Mom—but you made her let me come down here *now*. I had no choice. And when the cool weather starts, you'll send me north, where the winter is awful!"

Her father smiled thinly. "She wants to go to a private school near Miami, the one she's attended these last three years, mainly because her mother

is near there during the winter. But I don't like the silence in Cuba. It could be they're cooking up something. And Florida is pretty close to Cuba. So," sharply, "she goes to school up north."

Diana looked at him. Was he truly worried? If he were, and if Carolyn could realize it, it might make the girl happier. But Carolyn said, "Anyhow, if I have to go up north, I'll get Mama to stay up there, too, and I can be *that* close to her, at least."

Dr. Clydon scowled, started to say something, then stopped. When he did speak, it was to Diana. "I'll make my words as concise as possible, Doctor, but I do want to make the picture very clear to you. We need another doctor on our staff. We do have emergencies, and I've been looking for a general practitioner—there are so few, these days. And since your credentials are all in order and I've found that you've even done neurosurgery, which means that you're a very clever physician . . . well, I'm happy to offer you a position on our staff."

Diana stared at him, and then his words began to penetrate. "You've found—" she began, and tried to fight back the flood of anger that was rising within her. "And my credentials—you said nothing to me. Why?"

"I had to investigate, of course," he returned, paying no heed to her sharp tones. "And I'm happy it turned out all right." Then, waving that subject aside, he went on, "A G.P. here gets thirty thousand a year, with a suite of rooms in the staff house—just over the hill there. And you can move in any time."

Her anger mounted. He was taking her for granted! She replied firmly, "I'm sorry, but I can't accept, even if I wanted to. I'm filling in for Dr. Eldred while he's away. And I have my own plans for afterward."

"Dr. Eldred will never be able to take on his old job, you know. As for Dr. Tim Henry, I doubt that he'll be staying very long in Kaola City. He'll find it easier somewhere else. Of course, if he can't find another post, I might take him on here—give him a chance. But it wouldn't be as a high-ranking staff member, although I guess a position like that would be easier for a man like him, rather than having to start all over again somewhere else."

"Tim Henry's a fine doctor!" Diana cried, before she saw the fear on Carolyn's face and remembered the warning the girl had given her. The memory of it almost stunned her. This man had gone to such pains to investigate her background; he knew all about Dr. Eldred's condition;

he had already formed plans to block Tim's future, to channel it into a situation where he would actually control that future.

She lifted her eyes and found Carolyn's tense gaze still on her, and somehow she was steadied by the girl's concern.

But she had to proceed carefully. When she spoke, her voice sounded normal. "I'm sorry," she said, "but I'll need some time to consider your offer. Anyway, I'm presently tied up with Dr. Eldred and Dr. Henry. After that I have a commitment that I'll have to take up. But thanks, Dr. Clydon, for letting me see your hospital, and for offering me a position on your staff. It probably wouldn't work out," she added lightly, "because your patients seem to be mostly women, and women seldom care for female M.D.'s. So—well, good-bye, and thanks again!"

Lex Clydon gave her a slight bow. "I see that the car is back," he said, "and you'll get to your office in plenty of time, I'm sure. Thanks for coming. And when you straighten out your present situation, call and I'll send for you again . . . to stay. Carolyn, go with her to the car."

He headed for the office off the lobby. For an instant Carolyn and Diana stood there, looking at each other; Carolyn's face was pale. "He'll find a way!" she choked out, low. "He won't give up. He

knows you're a fine doctor, and he'll get you for the staff—and get even with Dr. Henry at the same time."

"But what did Dr. Henry do to make him so angry?"

"He told my father that he had no right to use the hospital this way, just for the rich. And it isn't that he wants you to come here because you're a good doctor. It's because he knows Dr. Henry needs you. Oh, don't do it, please! Don't waste yourself here!"

Diana caught her hand. "I couldn't take the job here even if I wanted to, Carolyn. I have other commitments—folks who really need me. And don't worry, hon. He won't hurt me, I'm sure."

Carolyn shook her head. "You don't know him," she whispered. "I do. I'm his daughter, and when he schemed to get me from my mother, I thought—I thought maybe it was because he loved me. But it was just to make her feel bad! Even now he won't let me go to a school where I'd be close to her." She took a deep, quavering breath and continued: "I like to be with you, and I've felt that way ever since the first time I saw you. But I don't think I'd even *want* to be with you if you accepted Daddy's offer. If you did, then you'd seem just like the rest of them here—all except Cousin Lissy."

Diana knew there was nothing she could say at that moment to drive away the girl's fears. Or her own, either, because, irrationally, she was beginning to feel as if she were getting entangled with something, something so strong that she might never shake it free.

"I've got to go, dear. Trust me. And say a prayer now and then!" Then she crossed the lobby and went outside. The limousine was waiting, the chauffeur already at the door to it.

The ride back went swiftly, but it was not fast enough for Diana. She wanted to get back into the familiar, honest atmosphere of the office where doctors put their patients first, and where patients truly needed help. Maybe that sort of atmosphere was alien to many of the new breed of physicians, but it was real here. Dr. Eldred had established it years ago, and he must have chosen Tim Henry because he sensed the same feelings in Tim. And he had trusted her enough to ask her to join the group.

And I'll stay! she promised herself. Even after Dr. Eldred comes back, I'm going to stay here and follow Dr. Eldred's plans through!

All the tension of her visit with Dr. Clydon was suddenly gone. He couldn't entice her to join his staff, and he certainly couldn't force her to do it. So everything was all right. Despite Carolyn's un-

natural fear of her father, there was certainly nothing that he could do to upset things. If he knew of a way, he would have acted before now.

The limousine turned into the office parking lot and stopped. Before the chauffeur could get out and open the door for her, Diana was already out, calling "Thank you!" over her shoulder as she hurried up the two steps to the side door.

"I'm home!" she announced, and when there was no answer, she headed for the back room. The thing she wanted most right then was to get into her white smock and swing her stethoscope about her neck and start seeing her afternoon patients.

She halted inside the room. For Tim and Valerie stood there close together, but not touching each other. Tim was staring down at a paper in his hand. Valerie was staring at Tim, and she looked frightened.

"Tim!" Diana cried, her voice husky. "Tim, what—?"

He jerked his head up and looked at her angrily. "You know all about it, don't you? You've been discussing it. That's why he sent for you, isn't it?"

"Know what? Discussed what?" she demanded, suddenly as angry as Tim looked. "Of just what are you accusing me?"

He kept staring at her, then suddenly he crum-

pled the paper in his hand and threw it across the room.

"I thought Clydon got you there to tell you all about it in a chummy way! You stayed long enough to get the whole dirty tale!"

"What *are* you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the start of Clydon's beautiful machine-rolling tactics!" Then, in tired tones, "We just got a notice that we're to get out of this building before sixty days are up. Lex Clydon has started the ball rolling. And when Dr. Eldred comes back and finds out—"

His voice died out, and the three of them stood there not looking at one another, but each thinking of the old man who would be so disappointed.

It was Diana who finally broke the silence, which had suddenly become unbearable. "We've got to find another location. Or—what about our lease?"

Tim's face went even tighter. "We had a three-year lease, and we thought it was long enough because we had the idea we might be building an office ourselves, one that would completely fill our needs. And we probably would have, if Dr. Eldred hadn't become so ill. Our lease runs out next month. I've already notified the realty firm that we'd sign a new lease, but I hadn't gotten an answer. Now I know why."

He walked to the window and stood there a moment looking out. Then he turned back. "As I told you, Diana, Lex Clydon controls the real-estate company that handles this place. In effect it's his. So what can we do?" he concluded bitterly.

Diana had to hunt for words to say, but Valerie spoke first. "Don't blame yourself for anything!" she told Tim. "You've done all you could. Dr. Eldred himself couldn't have done anything more."

"Thanks, Val," Tim said, but he was looking at Diana. "You'll be all right, of course, because you have a good future waiting for you back in California. And Dr. Eldred may not find it too hard to retire. So I guess there's nothing to worry about after all."

"Don't give up until you've tried *something,* at least!" Diana flared. "I'm as ready to fight as you should be. If we give up, then we're both letting Dr. Eldred down. I for one am certainly going to fight!" She wanted to make her stand clear.

"Fine!" Tim said dryly. "But first you'd better make up your mind about which side you're on. And when you do find out, stay with it!"

Diana stared at him, biting her lips. "You should know which side I'm on, Tim," she said huskily. "And—" But she never got a chance to

finish her sentence because Valerie had gone over to Tim and put her hand on his arm.

Her voice was very gentle, very concerned. "There's plenty to worry about, Tim. Your future is just as important as anybody else's. Dr. Eldred will recognize that and work hard to help you. After all, he's very well liked here, and folks will rally behind him—and you."

Tim just shrugged and said nothing. Diana wanted to add something, but only angry words came into her head. Then, with the effect of the sound of shattering glass, they heard a baby crying out in the waiting room, and Diana found the words to break the unhealthy atmosphere.

"At least we've all got work to do now!" she said. Then, to Valerie, "Will you bring my first patient to my office and make her ready? I'll change quickly."

Tim came away from the window, nodding as if he were as glad as Diana was to be reminded that there was work to do. "Same here," he told Valerie, "and since I'm all ready, send my first one in right away, will you?"

So the afternoon began, and Diana was relieved that she had a heavy case load. It allowed her to push to the back of her mind all the events that the day had spawned, and to concentrate on her patients.

After she finished with her last patient and changed quickly into street clothes again, she went out the side door and found Tim getting into his car.

"Just pull the door shut," Tim called to her. "It'll lock." Then he drove out of the parking lot and into the street.

Diana stood there looking after him. He hadn't even said good night. He had just gone off, apparently leaving her to face what was happening all alone.

She blinked back the hot tears, then went to her car and drove away.

# 14

She was halfway home, going over a less frequently used road so she wouldn't have to see Tim's car parked in front of some eating place. She herself wasn't going home to eat. She wasn't going to stop at all, not until she had driven far enough to get rid of the tension inside her, and if she had to keep driving all night, she would.

The sudden honk of a horn startled her. It came from a car traveling right alongside her. Good Lord, what now? she thought, recalling that holdups of women riding alone had grown all too common recently.

She stepped on the gas and almost cleared the other car, but it shot ahead, veering in a bit. Just when her apprehension had become greater than her anger about the day's happenings, a voice shouted impatiently, "For heaven's sake, Diana! Why are you running away from me?"

It was Keith Mizner, and Diana let out her panic in a long relieved breath.

The next minute they had both drawn off the

road and Keith was standing beside her car. "What gives?" he said. "But I guess I know. I shouldn't have overtaken you like that. Anyway, now that you see it's me, how about our going somewhere for dinner?"

She wasn't sure whether she wanted his, or anybody's, company for the evening. Then she thought of the long evening that would lie ahead if she faced it alone. Keith was, at least, amusing company.

"That'll be nice, Keith. It'll save me from a dull evening. If you want to follow me home, and don't mind waiting while I get ready—"

He reached a hand in through the window and patted hers. "Look, Diana, I'd follow you almost anywhere, in any direction, and wait for you any length of time, just for the pleasure of your company later. But if you'd rather go to some quiet place, that's all right with me. You look beautiful enough for any sort of place just as you are!"

"Thanks, Keith, maybe a quiet place would be nice—" She stopped, realizing, suddenly, that that was not what she needed. She wanted, for a while at least, to shed all memory of this day, and it seemed as if putting on clothes that were bright and going some place where things were lively and cheerful would drive away most of her unhappiness.

"Look, Keith, I want you to choose where we'll go, and then you could phone for reservations. While you're doing that, I'll rush home and shake off this day—which has been a bad one. Is that okay?"

"Sure, Diana, but make it fast, for I'll probably show up there in a matter of minutes. You'll find me parked outside, all shined up and ready."

Diana started her car again and drove home swiftly. And in less than an hour later, when she came out and saw Keith parked there, she felt the worries of the day grow foggier and more distant. And she slammed shut the door of her mind, making it difficult for those worries to return, at least for the present.

It wasn't entirely easy, during those next few hours, to forget her worries but at least she could push them down as soon as they started to emerge. The place Keith had chosen was pleasant and not too crowded or noisy. The food was excellent, and Keith knew how to keep the talk light.

It was a good evening, but when they were riding homeward, some of the bubbles went out of Diana's happy time, and she found herself remembering the time spent at Melissa Clydon Memorial Hospital and the situation she had come upon when she got back to her office.

"Keith!" Diana said abruptly. "Have you heard what happened today? About the office lease being canceled and—"

"And your visit to Clydon Memorial?" he broke in. "Yes, I heard about it, Diana. When I stopped at the office to see if you were around, Val was still there and she told me all about it. That's why I *had* to see you this evening, Diana!"

"I appreciate your thinking of me, Keith. I—I got little understanding at the office."

"I heard all about that, too. If Tim Henry had been there, I'd have punched him in the nose! And I did talk pretty rough to Val. But, after all, you didn't do one thing that you had no right to do. And it most certainly wasn't your fault that the lease was canceled, because the notice was mailed before you ever got the invitation from Clydon."

"I know, but—" She was silent a moment, then went on slowly, "Well, I probably shouldn't have accepted Dr. Clydon's lunch invitation, but I thought it might give me the chance to—to say some things I wanted to say. Only it didn't work out that way. He—" She gave a little laugh. "You'll never believe it, Keith, but he actually asked me to join the staff as a G.P. It seems that he has nobody who does general practice on his whole staff."

"Congratulations!" Keith exclaimed heartily, and reached out to pat her hand. "Aren't you the lucky gal!"

She stared at him, frowning. "What do you mean, lucky?"

"What do you think I mean?" he returned. "Can't you realize what a big chance this is for you? To get on the staff of an outfit like Clydon's will give you a steady opportunity to forge ahead, and with an assured income right from the start! And you deserve it, Diana. You really do have the very best coming to you. A chance to skim off the cream," he added with a grin.

But Diana didn't smile back. She said bitterly, "Oh, thanks a lot! I gave my best to earn the right to have 'M.D.' after my name. I worked hard to get the opportunity to heal and help. Then you say it would be fine to give it up and take a job on the staff of an institution like the Clydon Memorial!"

Keith frowned. "You ought to know what I mean, Diana. Good Lord, don't I know how hard you have to work to get your degree? All of us worked like dogs to get through, especially when you have to earn most of your own way, as I did, and I say that we've all earned the right to a pleasant life and good pay if we can get it! After all, no matter where you practice your profession, you'll

be giving them the result of your work and all you've learned, won't you?"

"Not in a hospital like the one Dr. Clydon runs," she returned shortly.

Keith drove on in silence for a few moments, then he turned to her and said, "Look, Diana, take a broad view of things. After all, the rich need help as well as the poor do. Some doctors must take care of them, and why shouldn't it be you and me, Diana?"

She looked at him without speaking.

He nodded as if in answer to a question. "Yes, I said you and me. Because you could help me get on the staff, too. Lex Clydon himself is friendly to me. He's even asked me when I'll be out of the Air Force, and if you just pushed me a little, I'm sure I could get a post there, too."

"Do you actually mean you'd be willing to confine yourself to the sort of work they do there? I just can't believe it, Keith! It wouldn't give any real satisfaction to a doctor who cared about his work."

"Why not? Look, Diana, I'll say it again, in case it didn't sink in the first time. I didn't get to be an M.D. the easy way. Nobody handed me enough for tuition and board in a good medical school. I had to work every step of the way. I was lucky to get into the service, and I've had my share of

hard, sickening work with the guys in Vietnam and at the base hospital here. Now I want an easier life. Is that so terrible of me?"

She shook her head. "No. Maybe it's right for you to look for an easier path. I think I understand that. You undoubtedly deserve a lucky break. But as for me—I've not done my share to help the world, Keith, but I vowed to myself that I would someday. So you can see why I can't desert my life plan."

He put his hand over hers. "But have you thought, Diana, about the fine life *we* could have together? Without the hurly-burly hard-ridden life scheme of the ordinary M.D.?"

She said nothing but drew her hand away.

"I'm asking you to marry me, hon," Keith said softly.

She shook her head slowly. "Please, Keith, I'm tired of making decisions. And—well, you may still get this job you want, and I wouldn't fit in there. So let's drop the subject, shall we?"

"Okay, Diana," he returned cheerfully. "But I'll bring it up again; we've got lots of time. And I'll be seeing you often, dear. I think you'll need me."

"Maybe I will, Keith. But for now, only as a friend. I can't even think beyond that."

"It's enough for now," he told her as he pulled

up before her motel apartment. At the door he said, "Suppose I come in for a while, Diana? You still need some sort of companionship to help you over this rough spot."

"Thanks, Keith. But I'd rather be alone right now."

He shrugged, then, smiling, he bent and kissed her gently. "Anyway," he said, "just remember that you've nothing, really, to worry about. So sleep well, Diana, dear!"

# 15

Then began the hardest two weeks Diana had ever known. The atmosphere at the office was quite cool, even worse than cool, for both Tim and Valerie treated her with extreme professional politeness. They made full acknowledgment of her professional skill, but they shut her out completely from their former friendly attentions. Tim didn't bother to discuss with Diana what he was doing to right things or to find a new location for the office; it was as if he just took it for granted that she would be leaving soon. And Diana was too proud to ask any questions.

That was the period when she began to ask herself if she couldn't learn to love Keith Mizner. For Keith was faithful and considerate. On the evenings when he could get away from the base, he would show up at the end of her busy day and they would spend the evening together, sometimes going to quiet places to talk, other times following the crowds. Yes, Keith was kind, thoughtful, and even managed to communicate a

sense of cheerfulness to her. When they were together, she was able to shake off a great deal of her hurt—and her anger.

Young Carolyn Clydon helped, too, for she visited Diana often, paying no heed to Diana's talk about the danger of night rides. Diana would come home and find a note under her door, saying that Carolyn would be over that night. And if it happened to be a night when Keith showed up, Diana would plead weariness and ask him to bring her home earlier than usual. Before long Carolyn would arrive, and, after a scolding from Diana, they would walk along the beach, talking of ordinary things until Carolyn left for home.

Several days had passed without Carolyn's visits, and Diana was growing worried until she finally did ride over one night. Then Diana grew even more concerned. For Carolyn looked thin and drawn, and the hurt in her eyes was real.

"What is it, hon?" Diana asked. "Are you ill?"

Carolyn shook her head. "Not really. I—I just wanted to have this visit with you before— Oh, I wanted to walk on the beach with you for a little while. I know you must be tired, but—but I won't keep you up long."

Something was obviously wrong, but Diana asked no more questions. "I can do with a walk myself," she assured the girl, brushing the dark

hair from her face. She thought of the day she had spent at the office, with Tim so remote and Valerie so polite but occasionally wearing a slight smile on her lips. "It's been a hard day," she added briefly.

So they walked together, feeling the coolness of the sand under their bare feet, watching the waves foaming under the silvery moonlight.

Finally Diana could stand it no longer. "Something is wrong, hon. Can't you tell me?"

A brief silence, then Carolyn shook her head. "It's just that I'm unhappy. And afraid. I mean—well, I'm leaving for that school up north very soon, and I hate the thought of it. You know there's no danger here from Cuba. That's just something my father cooked up to make sure I wouldn't have a chance to be near Mama! She's *got* to come down here for the winter, and she's looking forward to being near me, but"—she broke into tears—"I hate it all!"

Diana put her arm around the girl. "I'm going to miss you terribly, dear. You've done a lot for me these past couple of weeks. And now—well, you're going up north to school, and I'm leaving for California shortly. But we can write, can't we?"

"No!" Carolyn choked out. "How can I write you at the hospital here?"

"What hospital?" Diana asked, bewildered.

"Daddy's! You—why, you promised to come to Daddy's hospital, and—"

"I did *not* promise, Carolyn! I only said I'd think about it and let him know. I should have told him no outright, but I was afraid he'd take it out on—on Dr. Henry, or even Dr. Eldred when he gets back. So I put off telling him, and I know now that it wasn't fair. Well, I'll let your father know for sure tomorrow. Then I'll leave for California as soon as Dr. Eldred gets back and can spare me."

"But you can't refuse—it's too late! It was always too late! I mean—even if you'd said no right then, he'd have found a way—"

"Not with me! And *please* don't worry, dear. I'll handle it all right, and—"

But Carolyn had broken away from her and was running swiftly along the beach and toward the shadows behind the motor court. As Diana stood there staring after her even after Carolyn was lost in the shadows, she heard the sound of a horse loping recklessly through the darkness.

Suddenly Diana was filled with fear. What had Carolyn meant by her strange outburst? "Even if you'd said no, he'd have found a way."

The fear stayed with her even after she had hurried home and gone to bed. It haunted her un-

easy dreams, and when morning came and it was time to go to the office, the heaviness in her heart was still with her.

The same heaviness seemed to hang over the office as Diana went through the side door and then directly into her office. She stood there for a moment, almost wanting to run away and stay away. She couldn't, of course, so she set down her case and walked to the back room to pick up a fresh linen jacket and make ready for the day's work.

Through the doorway she saw Tim and Valerie looking at the Kaola City paper in Tim's hands. Diana hesitated a moment, then said crisply, "Good morning! Are any patients waiting?"

They looked at her, but neither answered her question. Then Tim tossed the paper on a small table. "Well, it seems that congratulations are in order," he rasped out.

"What are you talking about?" Diana asked sharply.

"Your new position. Your good news, I suppose I should say. So—congratulations!" With that he started for the door, his hands rammed into his pockets.

Diana remained in the doorway, blocking his way. "I want to know what this is all about!" she declared.

He glared at her, his blue eyes murky with

anger. Before he could say anything, Valerie was holding out the newspaper to Diana. Across the top of the page was a banner headline: "MOONSHOT BLASTOFF READY TO GO!" Then, just below it, Diana saw a smaller but prominent headline. "Dr. Diana Davis Joins Staff of Clydon Memorial Hospital."

She stared at it, speechless for a moment, then flared out, "It's a lie! I never agreed to it! I said I —I'd have to check my commitments in California before I decided, and—"

"Well, evidently he got some sort of word! So, as I said, congratulations!" Tim snapped, and Diana stepped aside blindly, letting him stride through the doorway and enter his office.

Then she hurried across to her office and shut the door with something close to a slam. Picking up the phone, she dialed the hospital, gave her name on request, and asked for Dr. Clydon himself.

When she heard him answer, she plunged at once into speech. "I just saw the unauthorized announcement in the paper! How could you give out such news when it's untrue—not at all settled! I told you that I had to check on certain matters back in California, and—"

"Don't let it bother you, my dear," Lex Clydon broke in smoothly. "I checked on them myself

and arranged for your release. You may come here at any time now. We'll be very happy to see you."

"I don't—" She stopped. She must not say too much. Not because she was afraid; as far as she was concerned, she didn't care how furious Dr. Alexander Clydon became. She would even enjoy a good fight with him. But there was Tim and Dr. Eldred, and judging from what Carolyn had just spilled out, Clydon might punish her by venting his fury on them. And that must never happen. There was only one thing she could do, and that was to clear things with Tim and plan how they could work together.

"I'll talk with you again later," she finished crisply, then hung up the phone.

Her hands were still clenched as she went to Tim's office and paused in the doorway. He was alone, reading the paper again, and his face was dark with anger.

"Tim, I want to explain," she began. "This thing in the paper—I had nothing to do with it. I certainly did not authorize it, because I had given no answer to his proposition. I just said I'd have to—"

Tim was looking at her without any understanding or gentleness. "Maybe it was easier this way," he said. "Anyhow, it's done, and we got the message." Shoving his hands into his pockets, he

went on caustically, "If you kept that big deal secret because you felt obligated to stay in our office till Eldred got back, think no more of it! I can handle things here with Val's help. So you're free to pack up your things and have the big black car come for you. And I'd very much appreciate it," he added grimly, "if you'd start your move right now!"

Diana drew a long breath. "I'll do no such thing!" she flared. She bit her lips and clenched her fists to hold back her fury. She could not fight with Tim now. She could not even explain, because he was in no mood to listen, or believe her if he did listen, and should she leave, there would never again be any friendliness between them. She would have to return to California and push him completely out of her life.

This thought calmed her down, and her voice sounded almost natural as she said quietly, "I'm sorry, Tim, but it was Dr. Eldred who asked me to come and stay while he was away. And I'm going to stay until he returns. And while I'm here, I intend to keep on working as Dr. Eldred expected me to!"

"Still the fighting doctor!" Tim observed sarcastically. "Well, as I said, you'd better be sure which side you're on and stick with it!"

Diana stared at him a moment longer, then

walked back to the rear room, where Valerie was removing some instruments from the sterilizer.

"Send in my first patient, please," Diana said as she reached for a clean linen jacket. She carried it back to her office, and by the time she had it on and picked up her stethoscope, the first patient came in.

It was Maria Hastie, in for her prenatal checkup. And Maria's eyes grew even larger as she saw Diana.

"I thought—I thought you wouldn't be here," she stammered. "I read in the paper that you're going to that hospital, the one that wouldn't let Jeanie in when she was so sick."

"What was in the paper was a mistake," Diana told her. "I'm staying right here until Dr. Eldred gets back. And then, if I leave at all, I'll go back to California."

Maria still regarded her in a troubled way, and there was an odd barrier of silence between them as Diana made the routine examination. Even her voice sounded restrained to her own ears when she told Maria that all was well.

Maria dressed quickly and came back into the office as Diana was finishing writing her notes on the chart. She paused and said hesitantly, "Jeanie —she's fine. We feel thankful all the time that she isn't dead. But if she gets sick again and you're

not here—we felt terribly bad just to think of it."

"Don't worry, Maria. Dr. Henry will be here, and Dr. Eldred, too. He'll at least advise if he's not able to do the actual work. So you and your little family will be taken care of."

Maria left, still looking troubled. Her mood seemed to be catching, for the other patients who followed her wore a hint of reserve that Diana had never faced before. Two of them mentioned the newspaper announcement, and several others made pointed remarks about Clydon Memorial Hospital. To which Diana made no response. The subject seemed even more important than the news about the moon-destined flight that would leave the earth in another week.

## 16

Thus was set the pattern of her days, days that passed slowly and roughly, like sledding over dry ground. Diana found it hard to face each day and get through the necessary work, for she found only heartache in the doing. The heartache didn't come from the work itself, not entirely at least. Most of it came from being there with Tim, with their old closeness ruined by misunderstanding. And the misunderstanding, she knew, could not be erased, for Tim's stubbornness and her own fierce pride would never again let her beg him to listen and understand.

So the days passed miserably, and in all the world there seemed only two people who were reasonably happy. One was Valerie, who went about smiling, almost purring, like the proverbial cat who was about to swallow the canary.

The other person was Keith, who still could not even begin to understand why Diana had not already jumped at the chance Lex Clydon offered her.

Keith exasperated Diana, but all the same, she was glad when he came by; it made the evening pass more quickly. And he came as often as he could get away, which helped, but there was no way she could keep him from referring to the subject she detested.

"It's a fantastic offer, hon!" he told her over and over, and on the way home one evening he added, almost sharply, "Don't be so foolish, Diana! You'll never get another chance like this!"

"It's not for me, Keith!" she retorted. "I've told you that before. So please let's not talk about it any more."

He put an arm about her and drew her close. "Okay. But do think it over, baby." His voice was husky. "It's just—it could help us both. And it could make things easier for us. It would keep you here, close to me. What I'm saying, dear, is that I love you. I've told you that before, and now I'll repeat something else. I want to marry you, Diana, and share a bright future with you. And it *could* be bright, Diana! You know that!"

She sat quietly for a moment, thinking dully, If I marry Keith, it might take part of the hurt away. I might even forget about Tim. But that thought brought tears to her eyes.

Keith was saying, "We've both worked hard,

Diana, but from now on we could live in luxury. I know you could get me on the staff—"

"Please!" she said sharply, and pulled away from his embrace. Fighting back her tears, she found a calm voice and went on. "I appreciate your asking me, Keith, but—well, I'm too filled with misery just now to make any new plans. I spoiled things for Dr. Eldred—and for Tim Henry—by talking back to Dr. Clydon. They're suffering because of what I said to Clydon."

"They ought to understand why you'd want to better yourself!" Keith declared stubbornly. "In this day and age, we each have to fight for ourselves!"

She shook her head tiredly. "Let's not discuss it any more, Keith. As soon as Dr. Eldred gets back, I've got to leave for California. I can't spoil my future as a doctor by neglecting to take advantage of the best that's offered me—and working at Clydon Memorial will not help. And you'll be out of the service in a year, you've told me, so you can't take advantage of any offer Clydon could make you now, anyway. So let's drop the subject now, shall we?"

Keith drove a short way in silence, then he said, "Okay, Diana. I'll keep still for a while. But please don't go back to California. Stay here where I can help you, if you ever need help."

She drew a long breath. Need help? Help to make her forget about the coldness from Tim?

"For now, Keith, I do want you as a friend. I need you that way. Maybe later—" But she couldn't say the words because thoughts of Tim Henry were crowding her mind too quickly.

"All right, hon," Keith said, then, as he drove up to her door, "I'm not going to push you, but think it over very carefully, Diana. Please." Then, more brightly, "Hey, why are you sending me home? Tonight's the big night—or early tomorrow is the big morning! The moonshot—have you forgotten? We can watch it together."

Diana gazed out toward the high tower that rose into the moonlit night, but felt no surge of excitement. Nothing really mattered.

"I'm sorry, Keith, but I'm afraid you'll have to watch it alone. I'm too tired. Thanks again, Keith, for the evening, and good night."

When she was in her apartment and had turned on the lights, she saw the piece of paper lying on the floor; evidently it had been pushed under the door. She picked it up and read it. It was from Carolyn.

Dear Diana,

I'm coming over in time to watch the launching with you. It will be the last time,

because Daddy's letting me go a week early so I can visit Mama.

C.

Oh, no, not tonight! was Diana's first thought. The launching had ceased to interest her at all. Then she thought of Carolyn coming to see her . . . Carolyn, who liked her enough to warn her against someone as close as her own father.

It'll be a change from everyone else I've been seeing, Diana told herself, and then, because it would be their last visit together, she suddenly wanted to make it pleasant and happy. She made fresh coffee and filled a thermos with it. Then she wrapped some fresh cinnamon buns in tinfoil and put them into the oven to heat while she changed into slacks and a shirt. After that, leaving a dim light on, she lay down to get a few minutes' rest. And fell asleep.

Something awakened her. Voices. Other people from the motel were leaving their cabins to watch the launching, and Carolyn had not come yet. A disquieting feeling filled Diana as she hurriedly put the thermos, two cups, and the heated buns into a brown paper bag. Then she went to the porch but saw no sign of Carolyn.

Diana's unease increased. Had Carolyn arrived very late and gone direcly to the place where they

always watched a launching? If so, she would undoubtedly start back for the cabin to see what had happened to Diana.

If that's it, I'll meet her on her way back, Diana decided. She picked up the paper bag, pulled the door shut, and hurried to the special place on the beach where she and Carolyn had spent a lot of their time together.

Carolyn was not there. Setting the bag down, Diana looked around, worried and full of wonder, for it was not like the girl to forget. And if her father had found out and stopped her from leaving, Carolyn would be in trouble with him now—which thought caused Diana more concern. And while she stood there trying to puzzle things out, the space capsule was shot into the air, leaving a beautiful trail of light behind it and a shower of sound that seemed to descend on the watchers below.

Even after it had arched farther and farther away, to be lost in space, Diana remained where she was, letting the crowd disperse; she was watching, waiting, for Carolyn to come running and tell her why she had been delayed.

After several minutes Diana went home and threw herself on the bed. She even left the door unlocked and a light on in case Carolyn showed up.

Morning showed that Carolyn never came, but it brought a sense of reason to Diana's thinking. What probably happened was that Carolyn simply couldn't get away or phone her. She wouldn't dare phone Diana, actually, because it would mean revealing the fact that she went on other night rides. For the girl at the hospital switchboard was obviously the sort who would listen in and run to Dr. Clydon with the news.

But she'll manage to let me know sometime today, Diana told herself as she got dressed for work. She was certain that this would be the case.

# 17

The day started off busily enough. When Diana came in the side door, she heard Valerie's laughter from the back room, followed by an answering chuckle from Tim. This same thing happened every morning, Diana realized. She would come in and hear Valerie laughing with Tim, almost as if it were something they had rehearsed for Diana's benefit. After all, from the side windows they could see Diana drive in and park. And Val would say something clever to make Tim laugh, and would move a bit closer to him—all for Diana's benefit.

Oh, no! No more of that! Diana told herself fiercely, and headed for her office. There she went to her desk and pressed the buzzer, which was seldom used because it was easier just to call out for somebody. After a short delay, Valerie answered. "Yes?"

"Please bring me a jacket," Diana said crisply. "Then send in my first patient so we can get started."

Valerie looked annoyed when she brought in the white jacket, but Diana just said, "Thank you!" and picked up the first patient's file from the desk. The files for the morning were all there, piled in neat order, Diana had to admit.

That started the day. The patients came in and were examined, questioned, and cared for. Diana noticed that Tim's time was filled the same way. Not that she saw him. Tim was in his office, and, as far as she knew, he hardly came out at all. If he did, it was when she was busy. But at any rate, the morning wore away until it was almost eleven-thirty.

The phone rang as Diana was writing out a prescription for a patient. Then, as Diana's patient left, Val appeared suddenly in the still-open doorway.

"You're wanted on the phone," she said. "It's your friend—Lex Clydon."

"Oh!" Diana's voice rasped somewhat as she picked up receiver. "This is Dr. Davis."

"For God's sake, come!" was the response, in a voice not at all like Dr. Clydon's smooth tones. "We need help!"

"Wait!" she said sharply to Val, who had turned away. Covering the mouthpiece with her hand, she went on, "This seems to be some sort of emergency call. Get Tim in here!"

Then she began to make some sense out of the breathless words that poured into her ear. "It's Carolyn—my daughter. We didn't miss her until breakfast time, and even then we thought she'd just overslept, but we found out later that she had never even been in bed."

"Oh!" Diana gasped, not knowing just how to tell Lex Clydon about her meetings with his daughter.

Before she could speak, he went on, "We hunted around the hospital, and then her horse came back, *saddled,* so we knew she'd gone somewhere for a ride and that something happened to her." His voice broke for a moment.

Diana felt shaky, and her voice was trembling to her own ears. "Have you searched around the Cape? I mean—the moonshot was last night—early this morning—"

"We found her by tracing the horse's prints. And—oh, God, she was lying on the ground. The horse had probably stumbled—but it's her head! Something's terribly wrong!" His voice was filled with panic. "She's still unconscious, and there's not a good neurosurgeon nearby that I can contact. She's got to have help right away, so you've got to come! If you refuse, we'll lose her!"

"But I'm not a neurosurgeon, I'm a G.P."

"But you've worked with a good neurosurgeon.

I found that out when I was inquiring about your —your commitments." His voice was becoming desperate. "Carolyn's getting worse every minute, and she'll die without help! And you can try, at least! Can't you see, if I lose her without even trying to save her—"

His voice broke and he stopped talking. Diana was filled with a deep concern about Carolyn's condition, and with terror at what was being demanded of her. How could she undertake anything so special?

Dr. Clydon's voice came again, repeating, "She'll die without help!"

By now Tim was in her office, and Diana covered the mouthpiece and looked at him. "Carolyn—his daughter—has sustained a serious head injury. He says she is getting worse by the minute and he can't find a neurosurgeon who can get here quickly enough. He—he wants me to do the work —and I can't!" Her voice broke. "She's my friend, Tim."

Tim had come close to her desk and evidently heard the doctor's voice—a father's voice—begging, "Please, *please* hurry! One of the grooms told me that she said you were her friend and that sometimes she rode out to see you."

Diana looked up at Tim. "Will you help me?"

she asked, and he nodded and put his hand on her shoulder.

"I'll be proud to do it, Diana."

Suddenly her fear left her. Not her worry and concern and caution, but the terror of taking on such an operation alone.

Her voice even sounded calm as she said into the phone, "I'll come at once, Dr. Clydon. And I'm bringing my own helpers. Have you a good surgical nurse who can get Carolyn ready?"

"Melissa Streeter is here. She was well trained as a surgical nurse but has had only occasional chances to work at it lately. But she can start things."

"Tell her to start right away, please. And, look —Carolyn should have whole blood through the surgery—"

"We've already begun that."

"Good! Well, I'm also bringing a good surgical nurse with me—it'll take two. But you'll have to supply an anesthetist."

"We have one right here. He's very experienced in regular surgery. In fact, he's filling in while our steady man is on vacation."

"Tell him we'll use propane and oxygen through a tracheal tube. We'll be there shortly, and the sooner we start on surgery the better."

"We'll have things as ready as they can be," Dr. Clydon told her, and hung up.

Diana looked at Tim. "We've got to make it, Tim. Carolyn has been coming to see me, and she's helped me very much. We've got to pull her through!"

"We will!" he assured her, and took both her hands and held them for a moment. Suddenly, all was well between them again.

Even Valerie was friendly. She began gathering up the sterile instruments that Diana and Tim decided they would need, for it was doubtful that Lex Clydon, with his limited surgical practice, would have a complete layout for such an operation.

As they worked, Tim and Diana talked of the procedure they would follow, and Valerie listened closely to be sure she understood everything they would need.

Fortunately, no serious cases were waiting in the office, and Valerie took it upon herself to explain the situation to them, so that when everything was checked over quickly and carried to Tim's car, the three of them were ready to go.

When they arrived at Clydon Memorial, they were welcomed quietly but with sighs of relief. Two men helped carry the equipment they had

brought, and Dr. Clydon hurried across the lobby toward them.

"Thank God you're here!" he said huskily, his usual sure-of-himself air completely gone. "Carolyn"—his voice trembled—"is as ready as they could make her without you being here. And we have the propane-oxygen mixture all set to give her, once the tracheal tube is in place." He paused, then added, "Her mother is flying down—I hope she caught the plane she wanted. I have a man on his way to meet her in Melbourne. So Carolyn will be happy if—"

Tim interrupted in a natural voice, "We'll need to read the X-ray pictures. Are they ready?"

Dr. Clydon nodded and took them into the X-ray room, where the still-wet pictures were waiting. "There's a crack in the skull," Diana said. "It's down rather low—and that's where the blood clots will form."

Tim agreed. "And where we need to go in. And the fracture— She's young, and it will heal. The sooner we get at it the better."

Then they followed Dr. Clydon to the surgical area, a section where old women had been made to look younger and plain-looking people made prettier. But where now a girl would be given her only chance to survive. And it was a girl Diana loved.

Diana held out her hand and Tim caught it briefly before they separated to get scrubbed for the operation. And as Diana entered the small scrub room where Lissy and Valerie were already scrubbing up, she heard the muffled sound of the guerney that was wheeling young Carolyn to the operating room.

Carolyn lay prone on the big table, her head already positioned. The nurses were busy arranging the instrument trays, and Tim, gowned and masked, was bending over Carolyn.

Another white-gowned man at the head of the table said, "Dr. Davis, I'm Dr. Eichman, the anesthetist, and since Dr. Henry has the tracheal tube in place, the patient is ready. Since she's deeply unconscious, she needs little of the propane, just enough to keep her under."

Diana thanked him and walked over to the patient—for that was what Carolyn would be considered from now on. Diana couldn't think of her as Carolyn, with her dark hair, her big eyes, her fears. She was merely a patient.

Diana drew a long breath. Could she go through with it? Then she lifted her eyes and met Tim's steady gaze, and she knew that she could. Taking one last look around to make sure that all was ready, she nodded and said, "Please take the

turban off." The next moment the covering was removed, and Carolyn's shorn head—totally black and blue on the lower left side, to the back—lay ready for whatever skills Diana could offer.

The clock on the wall began. Dr. Eichman reported quietly, "Blood pressure fair, pulse within reasonable limits. Everything points to go—as much as we dare hope for. Your patient is ready, Dr. Davis."

"Thank you," she said, and held out her hand for the tiny scalpel, which Valerie gave her. So Valerie was on her side of the table, while Lissy stood ready to aid Tim. Well, it made no difference now, except to make Diana feel that they were all working as a team.

With the fine point of the scalpel Diana marked a thin bloody oval that almost circled the injured area. Then she nodded to Tim, who carefully lifted the piece of skin, peeled it down like a hinged lid, then painstakingly fastened it securely out of the way with tiny clamps. The crack in the skull was plainly visible now, and there seemed to be a great deal of pressure beneath it.

Tim said gently, as if he read Diana's thoughts, "She's still so young . . . the crack can heal once we fix up what lies beneath it!"

She nodded, her thoughts already on the next step. It was the trepanation—making an opening

through which they could enter the skull to reach the internal injuries. Tim had a trephine ready, a cylindrical saw with a gimletlike handle. His eyes asked, "Shall I? Or do you want to?"

"You do it, Tim," Diana said, low. It wasn't that she was afraid to try it, it was because they were working as a team. "Please."

Tim put the center-pin of the trephine against the skull bone and burred one small hole after another around the exposed area of the head. When he finished, he nodded to Valerie, who handed Diana a tiny saw. She then went from one bored hole to the next, until the whole piece of bone was freed and could be lifted clear and laid in the warm sterile bath that Lissy had ready. She covered it carefully and put it where the temperature could be kept even until the time came to set it back in place again. Diana, cutting through the thick underskin, said a silent prayer that it could go back into the head of a living girl.

The next step was to loosen the cut underskin and gently move it away, leaving the intricate convolutions of the brain fully exposed.

Diana took a deep breath and raised her eyes to meet Tim's. This was the most delicate part of the surgery, for it was now that even a tiny error could cripple Carolyn, physically or mentally. The knowledge of this showed in Tim's eyes, too,

but he gave a little nod of encouragement, and Diana, somewhat strengthened, fought off her worry, took the tiny curved-blade scalpel from Valerie, and prayed again as she began to work her way through the delicate area.

Slowly, painstakingly, she worked, and just as carefully Tim helped her. It was as if time stopped. The only sounds in the operating room were the gaspy blowings of the breathing bags and the now-and-then click of instruments when Diana or Tim tossed a used one onto the tray, to be given a fresh one immediately. Sometimes Tim gave, in a low yet clear voice, a report of Carolyn's condition for her father to hear over the intercom.

Then, at last, the wound was open to view. An artery had been torn, and the escaped blood was a clotted mass pressed against the brain tissues. It had to be taken out, as well as the blood that was still spurting from the torn artery.

Tim said without any hesitation, "It's going to work out, Doctor!" Diana nodded, and they went back to their delicate task of tying the split artery and carefully sewing the folded-over ends, drawing a sigh of relief when the main bleeding had stopped. There were a few smaller blood vessels to tie off, and then came the task of clearing out even the smallest clots that still remained.

Even when it was all accomplished, they continued their inspection until they were sure everything had been done.

"We can close up now," Diana said huskily.

Tim nodded, then said, "Announce it, Diana. Her father—he really cares, I'm sure."

Over the intercom that would carry the news to the small gallery behind the windows on the upper floor, she said, "We are closing up now. And the patient—"

She looked at Dr. Eichman inquiringly, and he finished her sentence. "Blood pressure is still in the safe area and will be going up slowly. We are tapering off the anesthesia . . . and all other things seem on the beam!"

The work went easily after that. They drew the membrane back across the opening, stitching it closely. The piece of skull was removed from the liquid solution, fitted neatly back in place, and fastened firmly. Then the flap of outer skin was loosened from its temporary fastening, gently drawn up to cover the bone, and sutured with black tie-stitches. Dressings were applied and the anesthesia completely turned off, and then there was a deep silence for a moment, the moment it took to realize that the surgery was over. All that was needed now was time for Carolyn to recover. And the prognosis looked very bright.

"I couldn't have done it without your help, Tim," Diana said as Carolyn was gently lifted onto the guerney and trundled away.

Tim put his hand on her shoulder. "You were wonderful, dear," he said huskily. "And now isn't it time you went to her father? He saw it all from the observation room, but he'll need your assurance that his daughter will make it. After all, in spite of all the things I've thought about him lately, the guy deserves some consideration, I guess. He *is* human."

Diana smiled. "You come with me, Tim. We did this together!" They walked out of the operating room and down the wide hallway to where Dr. Clydon was waiting. With him was Keith Mizner.

"Surprised?" Keith said with a smile as Diana and Tim came up to them. Then, when Diana merely nodded, he went on soberly, "I drove one of the officers over to the airport and heard the news there. A Clydon chauffeur was there and he told me, so I came right over to see if I could help. The surgery had already begun when I got here, so I watched from the upstairs balcony."

Diana nodded again and turned to Dr. Clydon. "Carolyn will be all right, I feel sure. She's still young enough to escape a complete break of the lower skull. It cracked but didn't break, and it will heal itself in time."

"I'm grateful for that," he said with a sigh. "I thought from the X-rays that it might be like that, but I couldn't be sure."

"However," Diana went on, "she needs constant care. Nurses around the clock. Can you arrange that? Lissy and Valerie have already put in their share during surgery."

"I've sent out a call for R.N.'s. They'll get here as soon as possible. All of them will be well trained in surgical care."

"Good!" Diana was pleased. "Besides the nurses, I would like to have a doctor here during these next few hours. You'll be here, of course, but it would be well to have someone else around —for the first six hours, at least. It will take some of the strain off of you."

"I can stay," Keith said. "I'm not due back at the base till midnight, and I can probably extend that, if necessary. I can reach Diana or you very quickly if anything goes wrong."

Tim spoke up. "That's fine, Keith. Now Diana and I are free to go back to the office and finish up with our patients. We'll keep in touch with things here by phone, and tonight I'll bring Diana out for another examination. And after you leave, Diana—or I, if she wishes it—will be on call till the girl is out of danger."

"Thanks," Lex Clydon told him. "And—please

forget all the unpleasant things I've done . . . and help me, all three of you, to make this the sort of hospital it was meant to be."

"You mean a *regular* hospital?" Diana asked in amazement.

He nodded. "A regular hospital with a fine staff of doctors, the way Cousin Melissa planned it." Then he asked, "May I go with you and Dr. Henry to see my daughter? Just to touch her hand for a moment . . . and whisper to her what I haven't been telling her often enough—that I love her?"

Diana nodded. "That's what she should hear the first instant she is awake. And from her mother, too."

"She should be here very soon. And I think," he added slowly, "that she will stay. Changing the hospital to what it should be should make things different between us, because she hated it so this way."

"I hope so," Diana told him. "And I'm actually glad that you phoned California. They'll probably expect me to give up my commitments—I had till September. I'm going to stay right here in Kaola City to practice. That is, if Dr. Eldred and Dr. Henry will let me continue as one of their group." She smiled at Tim briefly. "Let's go to

our girl now. I know Lissy and Valerie will have her all settled by now."

She was right. Carolyn was tucked in bed and still unconscious when they entered her room. But when her father bent down and whispered something to her, it looked as if a faint smile crossed her face momentarily.

Tim and Diana talked little on the way home, and when they got to the office, there were only a few patients on their afternoon schedule.

When the last one had gone, Tim drew the blinds; it was almost five o'clock, anyway.

"I'll call the hospital again and check on Carolyn," he told Diana, "and if all's well, we'll decide what to do next. Do you realize that neither of us has eaten since breakfast?"

"I hadn't realized it," she said as she slipped off her white jacket. "But now that you mention it, I do have a queer feeling of emptiness."

"You should find a good doctor and get a cure!" he laughed as he picked up the phone and dialed. And from the expression on his face Diana knew that the news was good. "One or both of us will come out later this evening," he said before he hung up and turned to Diana. "Everything is fine! The nurses have arrived. Lissy is staying on to show them the ropes—'superintending,' Cly-

don called it. Valerie has already left—Keith took her. Clydon said there was really no need of his staying, since Dr. Eichman is there with him. So I guess Keith thought he'd make the most of it. Anyway, he and Val had a date."

"He and Val?" Diana repeated.

Tim nodded. "They're quite a twosome, on and off. To tell the truth, I think they understand each other very well. Both want all they can get honestly, and with Keith's prospects of getting a position at Clydon Memorial, she probably sees him in a good light. Oh, I'm not criticizing either of them. Keith has put in some hard licks with the Air Force, and Valerie had to push herself through nurses' training. They're both good at their work. So, bless 'em both! And let's talk about *us* now. What about a good dinner? Maybe at the Blastoff, where I took you that first night. And after that we can visit the hospital and—and talk."

She saw something in his eyes that made her heart beat faster. "It all sounds wonderful, Tim," she replied. "Give me a ten-minute start for home, and I'll be ready and waiting." His eyes still held hers, and she went on, "Look, Tim, I want to stay on with you and Dr. Eldred. He won't be working as hard as he always has been, and he'll need me. I'll take all the women and

babies, if you prefer it that way. I've been foolish, not wanting just women—"

"I was the fool, Diana. I think most men are like that—sort of irked when they see a woman who is far better in the same field than he is!"

For a moment she just stood there unable to speak. Then she found the voice to go on: "I learned something today, Tim. I found out that what I want most is to work wherever I'm needed. I just want to help people, to save them, if I can, and ease their pain at least. So if you and Dr. Eldred can find a place for me here—a permanent place—" Her voice broke a little.

Suddenly Tim was at her side and had caught her in his arms tightly. "Could we find a place for you? Oh, darling, we want you, we need you! We —" He stopped, then told her all he wanted to say with his embrace and his kiss, a kiss that took away all her fears, and all her weariness as well.

After a moment he chuckled. "We're two stubborn, hotheaded M.D.'s, do you realize that? But I'm the worst. You can change me, darling, if you'll marry me . . . work with me. Oh, I love you so much!"

Diana laughed. Tim was right, she knew. They were both stubborn. There would be clashes in the future, but they would survive them.

In his arms Diana was sure of that.

# Fighting Dr. Diana

## ISABEL STEWART WAY

In order to give her old family doctor a chance for a needed vacation, Diana Davis abandoned her plans to practice in a clinic near Los Angeles and flew to Florida. She was to be met at the airport by Dr. Timothy Henry, the elderly Dr. Eldred's colleague with whom Diana was to work.

And nothing could have been more surprising than Diana's first sight of Tim Henry, nor his of her. She had imagined him to be middle-aged and brusque instead of young and darkly attractive; his concept of a female doctor was swept to the winds by Diana's blonde loveliness and charm.